

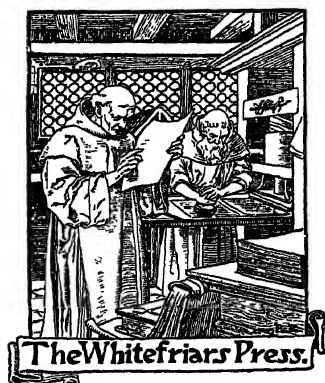
VICEREGAL LODGE LIBRARY.

No. _____

Volumes _____

NOT TO BE REMOVED FROM THE HOUSE.

66 Plain
OF
Kingle's?



FIRST PUBLISHED

In Demy Octavo . . 1860

In Medium Octavo . 1875

In Royal Octavo . . 1900

(*Limited Edition*)

“FABLES”

Illustrated
With 12 Hand-Coloured Engravings
and many Woodcuts by
JOHN LEECH

VOLUME II

London
Bradbury, Agnew, & Co. Ltd., Bouverie Street

PLAIN

Or

ANGELS

By The Author of
"Handley Croft" "Sponges Tour"
"Ask Mamma" &c., &c.



with illustrations by
John Leach

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD.,
PRINTERS,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

CONTENTS.

VOL. II.

CHAP.		PAGE
LVII.	THE PROVINCIALS	I
LVIII.	CAPTAIN CAVENDISH CHICHESTER'S HORSES	5
LIX.	AN EQUITABLE ARRANGEMENT	15
LX.	JOHN CROP	18
LXI.	THE GOLCONDA STATION OF THE GREAT GAMMON AND SPINACH RAILWAY	22
LXII.	BURTON ST. LEGER	29
LXIII.	THE LORD CORNWALLIS INN	35
LXIV.	MR. BUNTING ARRIVES AT BURTON ST. LEGER . . .	42
LXV.	MR. JOVEY JESSOP AND HIS JUG	49
LXVI.	A SHOCKING BAD SADDLE	57
LXVII.	A SHOCKING BAD HAT	62
LXVIII.	A SHOCKING BAD HORSE	66
LXIX.	THE SURPRISE	78
LXX.	THE EXQUISITE	82
LXXI.	PRIVETT GROVE.	87
LXXII.	HASSOCKS HEATH HILL	97
LXXIII.	THE UNION HUNT	104
LXXIV.	BRUSHWOOD BANK	110
LXXV.	THE JUG AND HIS LUNCHEON, OR MR. AND MRS. BOWDEROUKINS'S DINNER PARTY	120
LXXVI.	APPLETON HALL	137
LXXVII.	APPLETON HALL HOSPITALITY	146

CHAP	PAGE
LXXVIII. THE BACHELOR BREAKFAST AND BILLY ROUGH'UN .	153
LXXIX. MR. JONATHAN JOBLING'S HARRIERS	159
LXXX. PRIVETT GROVE AGAIN	169
LXXXI. THE NEW BONNET	175
LXXXII. THE RIDE HOME	179
LXXXIII. BRANFORTH BRIDGE	185
LXXXIV. A DAY FOR THE JUVENILES	190
LXXXV. MR. ARCHEY ELLENGER'S DINNER	204
LXXXVI. THE TENDER PROP REPEATED	213
LXXXVII. MAMMA INSTEAD OF MISS	219
LXXXVIII. THE GRAND INQUISITION	225
LXXXIX. THE DUKE OF TERGIVERSATION'S VISITING LIST .	234
XC. CARDS FOR A BALL	239
XCI. THE DUCAL DIFFICULTIES	244
XCII. THE GENERAL DIFFICULTIES	249
XCIII. THE DUCHESS OF TERGIVERSATION'S BALL . . .	252
XCIV. MR. BALLIVANT AGAIN	265
XCV. MR. BALLIVANT ON RACING	271
XCVI. WHO-HOOP !	276
XCVII. WHO-HOOP AGAIN !	280

ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD,

VOL. II.

	PAGE
"PLAIN OR RINGLETS?" ORIGINAL WRAPPER DESIGN	<i>After Title</i>
CAPTAIN CHICHESTER'S GROOM	7
JOHN CROP'S OVATION	25
MR. BUNTING AT THE GREAT GOLCONDA STATION	27
ON THE FREE LIST	39
RIDING A BURSTER	42
"CONFOUND THE ANIMAL," GROWLED MR. BUNTING	59
THE PRINCE DISPLAYS HIS HORSEMANSHIP	69
NURSING A SICK HORSE	78
MR. BUNTING INQUIRES THE WAY	89
MISS ROSA	93
MR. THOMAS BOYSTON	120
"NOW I'LL HAVE A LITTLE"	129
BILLY ROUGH'UN WENT SAILING ALONG	163
"I'LL HAVE IT OUT," SAID HE	181
B. READY	185
"WELL DONE, YOUNG 'UN!"	199
POPPING THE QUESTION	215
MR. BALLIVANT MAKES INQUIRIES	227
IN THE BALL-ROOM	244
A TREMENDOUS SWELL	257
JASPER ENGAGED IN HIS FAVOURITE GAME	273
THE FINISH	276

ENGRAVINGS ON STEEL.

(*Hand-Coloured.*)

VOL. II.

MR. BUNTING'S SHOCKING BAD HORSE . . .	<i>To face page</i>	74
"WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF SEEING YOU!" . . .	„	80
APPLETON HALL	„	144
THE JUG AND HIS JUVENILE FIELD	„	192
MR. BUNTING REJECTED	„	270

“PLAIN OR RINGLETS?”

CHAPTER LVII.

THE PROVINCIALS.



UT where and oh where, in the midst of all this Pringing and this pop, crack, banging, are our heroes Jack and Jasper gone? The latter, to be sure, we have recently seen in connection with his little bill and his race-horse; but Mr. Bunting has been lost sight of, while waiting for that time when “Mamma would be glad to see him,” as intimated by Miss Rosa and confirmed by her prudent parent herself at the Rocks. The reader, perhaps, will not attach much importance to Lord Marchhare’s attentions to Miss Rosa, though they had undoubtedly the effect of consoling her for Mr. Bunting’s absence. Our friend Jasper was still looked upon as the ultimate harbour of refuge if nothing better could be done; but in this enterprising gad-about world there is no saying what a day or an hour may produce. Jasper, of course, had the run of Privett Grove in a domestic cat sort of way, but there was no pressing or hinting that he ought to be offering. If the Bunting funds had not gone up, the Goldspink ones had rather fallen, and Mrs. McDermott would like a little more information about Mr. Bunting, if she only knew where to get it.

Cupid has the advantage over all other sportsmen in his season being continuous. His arrow flies as freely in the frosts of winter as in the heat of summer. Winter had now established

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

her full supremacy, the trees and hedges were leafless, and would-be sportsmen had now no excuse left for not taking the field in pursuance of the summer announcements. Some men are desperately keen so long as the corn is in the ground. Our friend Mr. Bunting, though not a "six days a-week, and more if possible man," could hunt a little just as he could shoot a little, and fish a little, especially when so doing would forward his views in other respects. Though absent, he was still true to the pretty hat, and longed for the day when he would be restored to its company. Meanwhile he spun several yards of bad verse in praise of our beauty.

As hunting runs a good deal in streams, the current of which generally sets one way, all for the grass, a man may make many inquiries in London ere he gets much information respecting a remote country. Of course if he falls in with a man of the land he will hear how the Scrambleford are the finest hounds in the world, how there is no such huntsman as Tootles, how their country is next to the Quorn, and a chap who can go over it can go anywhere; but for any reliable directions as to quarters and so on, he might as well ask what hounds there are in the moon.

Mr. Bunting felt the full force of this observation, as in the course of his peregrinations he varied the usual conversation about the weather, by asking any hunting man with whom he came in contact if he could tell him anything about the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds.

"Why yes, Sir Sampson Scamper knew there was such a pack, because he saw them advertised, but where they hunted he hadn't the slightest idea in the world. Didn't s'pose they were a pack that anybody ever went to see—rig'lar provincials—he made no doubt."

"Why, what the deuce can *you* want with the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds?" exclaimed Mr. Rowley Rushington, on being interrogated on the same subject—"Why, what the deuce can you want with the Duke of Tergiversation's hounds?" repeated he, eyeing Mr. Bunting suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing," quoth he, "nothing particular, see them.,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

that's all," stuttered our conscience-stricken hero, trying to turn the conversation.

"Oh, fiddle-de-dee ; one pack is very much like another now-a-days. If you want to hunt, go into a good country—costs no more than a bad one—not so much generally."

So Mr. Bunting profited very little by his inquiries, and felt it advisable to discontinue them.

Of course, if a man goes into a country solely for hunting, his best plan is first to ascertain where the kennel is, and then to look out for accommodation somewhere in the neighbourhood, but in a case of this sort, where the hunting was a secondary consideration—indeed, subservient to something else—the plan was to see what locality would be most convenient to the something else.

For this purpose Mr. Bunting conned the large map of the country hanging against the wall of the sinecure library, or rather sleeping-room, of the Polyanthus Club, putting his fore-finger on the modestly denoted Privett Grove, and then casting about for the castle, Mayfield, and other familiar, though yet unexplored, places. He felt himself quite at home with them, though he had never seen them, so often had he talked them over with Miss and Mamma, when—

" With them conversing, he," &c.

Mayfield was certainly what the country people call most "contagious" to Privett Grove—but then it was wide of the castle, added to which our friend would have to encounter his fat rival with his dirty five-pound notes at every turn and corner. Heatherfield was nearer the castle, but wide of the railway, and Cotfield Court did not seem likely to be large enough to accommodate a gentleman of his luxurious requirements. Burton St. Leger seemed larger, and a reference to a certain expensive topographical dictionary showed that it boasted three inns, viz., the Marquis of Cornwallis, the Saracen's Head, and the Malt Shovel. Upon the whole, therefore, after mature deliberation, and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

all the available information he could obtain about the Duke's derided country, he determined to throw himself upon the resources of Burton St. Leger. To this end he began to prepare himself, and ultimately made the arrangement we shall presently disclose.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LVIII.

CAPTAIN CAVENDISH CHICHESTER'S HORSES.



HE benevolence of the Londoners with regard to their horses can only be fully appreciated by those who are aware how much those excellent people are in the habit of giving things away. Not a number of "*The Times*" do we take without finding some most excellent offer, a steady cob, equal to carry a castle, without fault or blemish, to be parted with for one quarter his value to insure a good master and a comfortable home.

"A highly broken lady's horse to be disposed of or lent, subject to approval, with any trial allowed, either on the road or in the riding-school."

Next, "A gentleman having a pair of well-bred, handsome grey horses, will lend them until the summer, or sell them at a great sacrifice. They are 15 hands 3 inches high, five and six years old, quiet in single and double harness, and quiet to ride; will carry ladies; also good hunters, step well together; have grand action, with light mouth, and temperate; splendid brougham or phaeton horses; sold together or separately with their suits of clothes. Warranted sound, and one month's trial given. To save trouble, no dealer need apply."—A useless exclusion, seeing that none would be weak enough to do so; but then it looks as if the tender-hearted owner merely wanted to secure good quarters for his dumb favourites, where he could occasionally have the pleasure of seeing or hearing of them. And what does the reader think the disinterested party asks for these pieces of perfection—

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

these "Matthew's at home" of horses—five and six years old ? own brothers most likely, in the prime of life—" Three hundred guineas ?" as Tattersall would say. Two hundred and fifty ? Two hundred ? A hundred and seventy-five ? A hundred and fifty ? A hundred ? A paltry hundred ! No, not even a hundred—ninety guineas ! Ninety guineas is all that is asked for a pair of well-bred handsome horses, that can do everything, and a month's trial allowed. What can be fairer or more liberal ! With three such offers, a man might have his season's job for nothing. First the grays, then the bays, and next, perhaps, the silver roans. In fact, the Cockneys are so soft and generous that they are always wishing to oblige other people with their horses. Their kindness in this matter exceeds all belief. They are always offering. That splendid brook-jumper Tophthorne, seems to be getting lent or given away every day. Somehow the offers all run upon horses. We never see a good cow, or a carriage to be lent, or a fat pig to be sold for half-price.

That there are a great many well-to-do people ready to avail themselves of such bargains is evident by the number and pertinacity of the advertisements. Even our friend Mr. Bunting was not above accepting a handsome offer of the sort.

Whatever a man's mind is running upon, to that point will he naturally turn his attention when perusing his paper. Thus, if he is thinking of his beloved "Consols," he "at's" the City article first, sees whether they are on the rise or the fall ; if he wants a cook, he skims the "want places" advertisements ; if a grand pianoforte, he knows where to go ; the same with regard to coals, candles, carpets, or what not.

Our friend Mr. Bunting's too susceptible mind running a good deal on spurs and Spanish hats, caused him to look occasionally into the second page of "*The Times*" Supplement, perhaps to see if there was anything likely to suit his charmer, who had frequently expressed a desire to have a fine horse with thin legs, and a flowing mane and tail, instead of her pony. As luck would have it, just at the time of the



CAPTAIN CHICHESTER'S GROOM.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Tergiversation trip an advertisement appeared in the usual column, stating that in consequence of a bad fall out hunting, a gentleman would be glad to lend his "two splendid hunters, Owen Ashford and The Exquisite, to anyone for a month or six weeks who would ride them fairly, and keep them in condition," an offer that does not occur every day, just in the cream of the hunting season ; and though our friend had about made up his mind that his own two horses would do all the dangerous he was equal to, he nevertheless, after considering it a little, got into one of Cutbush's safety cabs and bowled away to the indicated quarter, viz., Sligo Mews, Rochester Square, there to see these magnificent animals. Arrived at the Square, he paid his fare, popped out of the vehicle, and, with the slip of paper in his hand on which he had written down the address, began asking his way to Sligo Mews. Police constable 49 B pointed it out to him, and away he went as directed. It was not a very inviting locality, and appeared worse in consequence of the sudden transition from the openness of the Square to its contracted limits. It was a long narrow alley running the whole length of the square, interspersed with dunghills, dairies, coalsheds, and cabbage shops, with here and there a marine store dealer. As Mr. Bunting wended his way, taking care of his boots, the women looked at him and smiled, as if there was something unusual about him, but when he paused at 51 A, and began asking in a loud and audible voice, for "Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom," there was an increased supply of plain or ringlets at the windows and doors, with more smiling and putting of aprons up to the mouth.

"Where shall I find Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom?" demanded Mr. Bunting, wondering what they were giggling at—"Where shall I find Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom?" repeated he, reading the address from his slip of paper.

"Touch the bell above your head, Sir!—Touch the bell above your head, Sir!" exclaimed a chimney sweep from a window over the way, and looking up, Mr. Bunting saw the half-rod,

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

half-chain of a little bell-pull dangling at the white door-post beside him. He gave it a gentle pull, and stood waiting for the result. Scarcely had it concluded its tinkle, ere a rustle up the adjoining entry announced an approach, and a man came, settling himself into a greasy gray coat as he walked.

He was not at all a prepossessing looking person, nor at all the sort of groom that one would expect to find attached to the person of such an aristocratically named Captain. He looked like a cross between a circus-man, a dog-stealer, a cow-leech, and a besom-maker. In person he was about six feet high, but awkward and ill-proportioned, close-clipped, clean shaved and moustached, with a green patch over his right eye, and all the roguery of the two compressed into his left one. That indeed was a piercer, and Mr. Bunting felt rather nervous as its ill-omened lustre settled fully upon him. He inwardly resolved whatever he did about the horses he wouldn't borrow the groom.

"You be come to see our nags, I s'pose," observed the man, giving his greasy vest pockets an external squeeze for the key, and then diving deep into his baggy broad patterned brown cord ones. From the right pocket he then fished up the ring-key, which he quickly applied to the lock of the newly-painted pea-green door, hallooing out, "Matthew Andrew! Matthew Andrew!" as he opened it.

"Walk in, Sir! walk in!" continued Peter, in a peremptory sort of tone, as our hero rather hesitated on the threshold—"walk in, Sir, *do*," and Mr. Bunting remembering the dislike these gentry have to a breath of fresh air in the stables, and wishing, perhaps, to escape the criticisms of the now gathering crowd, almost involuntarily complied, trusting to the publicity of the place for not being murdered. The door was closed and bolted inside as soon as he was well in, and an attenuated ginnified-looking lad, attired in a full suit of dirty fustians, came crawling head foremost down the loft ladder in reply to the summons for "Matthew Andrew."

"Open the window-shutter," said Peter, adjusting his stable-cap on his grizzly head as the lad reached the ground, and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

while the boy was obeying his master's orders with the aid of a pitchfork, Peter drew back the brown-holland curtain of another long slip of a window further on, and threw a general light upon the scene.

It wasn't so bad as it seemed, and barring a certain smell, more resembling that of a chemist's shop than a stable, there was nothing remarkable about it. It contained three stalls, two of which were occupied by horses, the other with fodder, while a goodish hat with a new cockade hung conspicuously against the back wall.

"Humph!" mused Mr. Bunting, eyeing the whole, and thinking perhaps Peter might not be so great a ruffian when properly dressed to attend on his master. He certainly did not look well then. It was now that great master of arts' turn to operate, and hitching up his baggy shorts, and giving his tell-tale nose a rub across the back of his hand, he fixed his evil eye upon our watchful friend, and proceeded to make a mental estimate of his character. Peter thought Bunting looked soft, but he might be hard for all that, and it behoved Peter to be circumspect.

"Well now," said he, nodding towards the horses, "there be the nags. In all humane probability you'll know the cause o' their bein' in this 'ere unfortunate perdicament," scanning Bunting attentively as he spoke.

"Why yes, your master has had an accident, hasn't he?" asked Bunting, remembering the terms of the advertisement.

"Bad accident, *bad* accident, *werry*," replied Peter, shaking his head. "No fault o' the 'osses though, I must say that," continued he, vindicating the character of his quadruped. "I measured the bruck, and there was near nine yards o' water, with a *werry* rotten takin' off—in fact, one that none but Matt.* Mytton and my master would ever have thought o' ridin' at, but these 'ere young gents will be fust or nowhere, and indeed I *werry* much fears that it may put him nowhere," Peter applying the corner of a very dirty old red cotton kerchief to his roguish eye as he spoke.

* "Jack" we suppose the worthy meant.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"Then he wants to lend them for a time in consequence of the fall?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"He wants to lend them for a time in consequence of the fall," repeated Peter, delighted to see that Bunting was swallowing the bait—"the Avertisement," said he, pulling a *Times* Supplement out of his pocket, "says for a month or six weeks, but, 'atwixt you and I,'" continued he, nudging Mr. Bunting confidentially, with his elbow, "I da'say whoever gets them may keep them to the end o' the season."

"What, he's much hurt, is he?" asked Mr. Bunting consolingly.

"Oh, despert, despert," replied Peter, with a frown, and an ominous shake of his head—"spine, I should say—spine," putting his right hand on his own back—"doctor says 'No,' but I says 'Yes,' and I werry much fear I shall be right," Peter applying the dirty ball of kerchief again to his blear eye as he spoke.

It was now clear that Mr. Bunting was going to bite, so as soon as his feelings could be properly composed, Peter restored the kerchief to his pocket, and turning to the boy said, with an air of authority, "Strip that 'oss."

Forthwith the young vagabond, rushing up to the horse's side, seized the straps with his teeth, and undoing the buckles, very soon had sheet, and blankets, and roller, and hood sweeping over his quarters and down his bang tail.

"There! there!" exclaimed Peter, extending his right arm in an attitude of admiration, "that is the Hexquisite, the best of the two, for I disdains the dealers' hartifiz o' showing an inferior hanimal fust."

The Exquisite certainly was a beautiful animal, a bay, or rather something between a bay and a mouse colour, the horse having been clipped or shaved, giving it that good firm condition those operations impart. He had a small well set on head, a good intelligent eye, lengthy shoulders and quarters, with large clean muscular legs. Altogether a very superior looking animal.

"Go hup to 'im, Sir! Go hup to 'im," said Peter encouragingly, and Mr. Bunting, albeit not very fond of strange horses, went

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

sneaking up the stall to where the boy now had hold of the Exquisite by the head.

"Quiet as a lamb!—Quiet as a lamb! Child might ride 'im!" continued Peter, as the horse began snuffling and smelling at our friend. "Sixteen 'ands zactly," said Peter, as Bunting began chinning him—"sixteen 'ands zactly—he's the 'oss to carry a man out of the dirt, and make the fences look small. I'm dashed if there's anything too big to stop 'im—anything in reason and moderation at least. In cos, if gents will ride at navigable rivers or harms o' the sea, they will get into grief, whatever they're on; but for a man as treats an 'oss as an 'oss, and not as a hengine, that is the one that can give satisfaction. There! throw the rug over 'im, boy, and strip Howen Hashford," now continued Peter, shifting his position to the back of the next stall.

"Oh, thank you," replied Mr. Bunting, coming gingerly out from beside the Exquisite, "I won't trouble you to do that, I dare say I can see all I want as he stands."

"Well, Sir, wot you please, Sir," replied Peter, rather chopfallen, fearing Bunting was going to back out, "only I shouldn't be a-doin' o' my master justice if I didn't *offer* to show 'im. Better strip 'im," continued he, coaxingly—"better strip 'im. No trouble. Come, boy, look sharp! strip 'im at once!"

Matthew Andrew then at the clothing with his teeth as before, and very soon had Owen Ashford in his "when unadorned, adorned the most" state.

Notwithstanding Peter's assertion to the contrary, Owen was the handsomer horse of the two; a beautiful dapple gray, with an arch neck, and a splendidly set on tail. If it hadn't been that he was to be lent, there might perhaps have been a slight imputation of ginger. Bunting conned him quietly over, not caring to contradict the groom as to the relative merits of the two, and thinking how well he would look upon either. At length Bunting spoke—

"Well, they are two very nice horses," said he.

"They are two werry nice 'osses," replied Peter. "No man

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

need wish for no better. Put the clothing on, boy," continued Peter, addressing the lad.

Bunting then drew back a pace or two, and contemplated them from beside the cockaded hat.

"And they are to be lent," said he, after a pause.

"To be lent," repeated Peter, slowly and deliberately, feeling that they were drawing up to the critical point. "To be lent, that is to say," continued he, scrutinising Bunting, "lent to a gent as is not over heavy, and will ride them fairly and well."

"I dare say I can do that," observed Mr. Bunting—who had a pretty good opinion of his horsemanship.

"Well I don't know but you can," replied Peter, diving his hands into his greasy breeches pockets—"as well as any as has been to look at 'em yet, I dare say."

"What, you've had some other parties after them, have you?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"I believe I *have*," replied Peter, winking his eye at our friend—"Chaps of all sorts and sizes—great, bulky, barge-like fellers, and little bits of bodies that could 'ardly 'old a cat together. There was a Mr. Percival Dobbin, from Ball's Pond, or some such queer place 'ere, not 'alf an hour afore you came, who looked more like the mark nor any on 'em, but I should say he's a good stun 'eavier nor you, and altogether, he wasn't quite a man to my mind."

This information rather quickened the pulse of Mr. Bunting's aspirations. He wouldn't like to let Dobbin have the horses.

"Then you and he didn't deal?" asked he.

"We didn't deal, and we didn't not deal," replied Peter, with a chuck of the chin. "I told him I should give him an answer the day arter to-morrow."

"Well, but have you power to make the arrangement without referring to your master?" asked Mr. Bunting, thinking that "quick" was the word.

"Power! to be sure I 'ave the power," smiled Peter, "I've lived man and boy these forty years in the famly, and if I ha'n't power to make an arrangement, I don't know who 'as."

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

This rather threw a light on the matter. Peter was evidently an old family servant, hence his one eye and disregard of appearances. Perhaps his young master had put his eye out.

"Then the horses are ready to start at any time?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"Any time, any time," replied Peter, "arter we get 'greed ; to-morrow morning, if you like."

"Well, I don't know why we shouldn't agree," observed Mr. Bunting, half to himself and half to the man.

"Nor I," assented Peter, carelessly, adding, "if you give me a reverence, I makes no doubt I shall find all right."

"Well, my name is Bunting—Mr. John Bunting; I am a member of the Polyanthus Club, and of the Tearaway hunt," producing a card of his Club as he spoke, and handing it to Peter, who received and pocketed it in silence.

"Then you'll do nothing with Dobbin till you see me again?" observed Mr. Bunting, sidling to and fro, with his hands in his peg-top trouser pockets.

"Nothin' with Dobbin till I see you again," assented Peter, adding to Matthew Andrew, "Light the gas, boy."

Mr. Bunting having then taken his tiny umbrella from the top of the corn-bin, next began sucking its ivory knob, thinking if there was anything else he could do. He thought not. Yet stay, give the fellow a sovereign, and that will keep matters straight; so saying he dipped his fore-finger and thumb into his waistcoat-pocket, and fishing up a sovereign, found Crankey's hand attracted to his on the instant. It jinked into his pocket just as the boy lit the jet of the gas, and Peter then unlocking the door, bowed Mr. Bunting out, hoping to have the pleasure of seeing him the next day.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LIX.

AN EQUITABLE ARRANGEMENT



T is a remarkable fact that we never met anyone yet who liked to be laughed at, and though the gathering gloom of a wintry day was fast shrouding the passenger from observation, our friend Mr. Bunting on leaving Captain Cavendish Chichester's stables, bolted out at the other end of the Mews, in order to avoid the invidious gaze of the aprons by the way that he came. The exit end gained, a short street to the right led him back to the cheerful regions of Rochester Square, on the reverse side to that on which he before entered. Day was now about done, oil and gas were usurping the place of the mist-obsured sun, and careful servants were shutting the shutters, while the me-a-u of the milk-maid and call of the crumpet-man began to awaken the areas.

It is a good thing for a mind-perplexed man to get away from the scene of contention, and Rochester Square formed a healthy and agreeable contrast to the fetid smells of Sligo Mews.

Mr. Bunting was now enabled to take a calm and dispassionate view of the matter. Here was an offer that seemed almost like a god-send to aid his endeavours with his incomparable charmer. True, the groom was not very good, but the horses were magnificent, and looking at such animals made him more sensible of the imperfections of his own. He thought he oughtn't to miss such a chance, and yet he didn't exactly see how he could manage it. Four horses would be of no use

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

to him with his mild style of riding, besides which he wouldn't like to go about with a man with one eye. The slang cry of "There you go with your eye out!" occurred to his recollection. He would like to dispense with Crankey if he could. The question was how to manage it. At length a thought struck him. If I could get Captain Cavendish Chichester to exchange horses for a time, it might answer both our purposes; I should get my riding, and he would get his horses kept in wind, and condition, and the eatage of the one could be set off against the eatage of the other. "Dash it! if I don't think that will do," said he, delighted at his cleverness, and liking the proposition the more he thought of it. He took a rapid turn round the entire Square, and having conned the point well, decided it would do; at all events that he would make the proposal. "And why not at once?" asked he. "Why not, indeed?" was the answer he gave himself. That point settled, he right-about-faced, and again made for the little street by which he had re-entered the Square, and was speedily back in the gloom of Sligo Mews. Faint glow-worm-like candles flickered here and there, varied by an occasional stable-lantern, or the red fire of the itinerant pie or roast-chestnut man. Having taken his bearings pretty accurately, our friend came upon 51A, just as Peter, having seen the four o'clock stable-ceremonies performed, was retiring for the evening.

"Hillo!" exclaimed Bunting, as the key turned in the lock, and the retrograding groom nearly trod on his toes—"Hillo!" repeated he, "is that you?"

"It's me," replied Peter, turning the lantern upon Bunting, to be sure of his man. "Oh, Mr. Bunting, I see," continued he, for people generally mangle a name if they can.

"The same," replied Mr. Bunting, pocketing the injury. "It has just occurred to me," continued he, "that the Captain and I could make an arrangement that would be mutually beneficial."

"Well, Sir," said Peter, wondering what it was.

"You see I have a couple of very neat horses, but not quite the perfect hunters I should like to take into the country I'm

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

going to, where there are bullfinches that require big horses to take in their stride, and also a good deal of water-jumping, so that altogether I want to be rather extra well done by, and it occurred to me that it might suit Captain Chichester if we were just to change horses for the time, and let the servants remain as they are—you taking my horses, and my groom taking yours, by which means you could remain quietly with your family in London.”

Now mark the amiable benevolence that attends these London horse-dealing transactions ! A groom in the country would have looked as black as thunder, and growled, “ No, I’m blowed if I do anything of the sort—I’ll not part company with my ’osses not for no man ! ” but Peter Crankey came quite pleasantly into the thing, and only seemed anxious about the merits of the animals he was to have in exchange. He was quite “ ’greeable, only he wouldn’t like to look arter no rubbisin’ cat-legged beggars that would do him no credit, but if the ’osses were as Mr. Bunting described, and the reverence Mr. Bunting had given was good, he didn’t see why the ’rangement shouldn’t be made.”

Well done ! thought Mr. Bunting, chuckling at his own acuteness, and thinking what a swell he would be on Owen Ashford.

It was then arranged that Peter Crankey should visit Mr. Bunting’s stable in Haycock Mews, May Fair, on the morrow, and if matters were approved of, that the exchange should take place the day after. And Mr. Bunting went away extremely well pleased with his bargain, and chuckling at the idea at having disappointed Mr. Percival Dobbin.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LX.

JOHN CROP.



REAL London groom is a gentleman of great pretension and powers of indolence. He can make less work serve him than almost any other description of servant. They are like the men of a hunting establishment without the exercise—they can dress and they can ride—at least sit a horse in a walk; but as to dressing the horse or caring about him after they get off him, that is no part of their business—there are other people paid for doing that. So, as the huntsman comes shambling into the yard for his horse in the morning and returns him to the place from whence he came in the evening, do these natty elbow-squaring, neat neckcloth-tying grooms expect to be presented with their animals. The groom who does least is considered to be the greatest man. Between men of this description and the humble-minded individual who advertises his general willingness, there is indeed a great gulf. One is the show, the other the working partner in the great firm of Horse, Hound, and Man. Sometimes indeed the willing man includes matters not exactly within the scope of his jurisdiction, as, for instance, “groom and gardener, can wait well at table;” or, more humble still, “gardener and groom, who can milk and butcher if required.” Considering the number of works we have on the choice and management of horses, we wonder no master has ever favoured the public with a treatise on the choice and management of grooms, a subject of quite as much importance, seeing that the horse is of very little value without

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

an efficient attendant. There are few but whose experience would supply a few wrinkles.

Mr. Bunting's groom, John Crop, was a perfect model of the do-nothing order. Accustomed to the light, trim, drawing-room-like stables of the metropolis and great watering-places, he had an idea that there were helpers and men to do all the dirty work for the smart grooms in the country. He could cock his hat and button his coat and arrange his belt, and make his boots and breeches approximate becomingly; but as to anything useful, that was quite out of the question. He cleaned his own clothes and kept himself trim and smart to ride after his master, and what more could a good-looking, fresh-complexioned young fellow be expected to do.

When Peter Crankey's emissary (for he did not go himself) arrived at Benson's livery and bait stables in Haycock Mews, May Fair, to inspect our hero's horses, Crop was waiting for orders at Mr. Bunting's lodgings in Clarges Street; but the production of Mr. Bunting's card enabled the party to see the horses, squeeze their wind-pipes, punch their ribs, and otherwise examine them under the auspices of the helper. That done, the man turned on his heel and walked deliberately out of the Mews without note or comment, followed by the usual ejaculation of "Ah, you're a gemman, you are," from his late assistant. But if the man was remiss the master was prompt; for when Mr. Bunting arrived at the Polyanthus Club, the porter on handing him his letters announced that a party had been there to say he could have Captain—Captain—Captain somebody's horse.

"Captain Cavendish Chichester's," interposed Mr. Bunting.

"*That's* the name, sir," replied the porter; whereupon our hero went bounding up stairs into the morning room, looking as happy as R—d—l P—lm—r when he has thrown his client's case away.

His various notes, letters, cards, &c., hurriedly conned, he got into a Hansom cab and went rolling away to Rochester Square, there to bind the bargain. What a good thing it was, he thought as he galloped along, that he had given the fellow

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

a sovereign. How foolish that finely-named Mr. Dobbin would look when he came expecting to show off on the gray. And our hero thought if Owen Ashford and he did not captivate Miss Rosa, nothing would. Arrived at Sligo Mews, he presently thought the money might have been better bestowed; for Peter on appearing had evidently been basking in the sunshine of the gin-palace, and had dimmed his evil eye considerably. Still, as a man who is never exactly sober is never quite drunk, his indulgence had only the effect of engendering familiarity, causing him to receive our dandified friend with extended hand instead of giving him the cap or hat rap of servitude. Somehow or other, too, Peter had shaved off or forgotten his moustache.

"Ah, Captain!" exclaimed he, grasping our hero's hand severely, as he turned, or rather bundled, him into the stable; "Ah, Captain! you've got the two besht (hiccup) oshes that ever (hiccup) man laid (hiccup) leg over (lurch), don't care where the two next (hiccup) besht are. Now when shall we shwop? When shall we shwop?" continued he, diving his hands into his dirty breeches pockets and making a rubbing-post of our friend as he spoke.

"Well, directly," replied Mr. Bunting, wishing to be done with the nasty fellow, the return smell of Juniper being stronger than he liked.

"*Di*-rectly ish the word!" hiccuped Peter, nudging Bunting with his elbow.

"That's to say, to-morrow morning," qualified Mr. Bunting, thinking Peter was in no condition to deliver.

"Morrow mornin' ish the word," responded Peter; "morrow mornin' ish the (hiccup) word, Equinocshal Gale, Esheware Road."

"No, no, the Golconda Station—the Golconda Station," frowned Mr. Bunting.

"Musht stop at the Nocshal Gale," rejoined Peter, cying Bunting reproachfully.

"No, no, take it as you come back—take it as you come back—after you get my horses done up," replied our friend, snappishly.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"Well, Golconda Stashon ish the word—Golconda Stashon ish the word," muttered Peter, adding, "What time?"

"Eleven thirty," replied Mr. Bunting, sternly; "but the horses should be there before that to load—say eleven punctually."

"Eleven punc. ish the word—eleven punc. ish the word," assented Peter, drawing his dirty hands out of his greasy-topped pockets, adding, "You'll get my oshes there, and I'll get your oshes 'ere. No, I'll get your oshes where?"

"Well, at my stable," replied Mr. Bunting.

"No—s'pose you bring 'em 'ere, guv'nor," rejoined Peter, after a pause, lurching as he spoke, and fixing his evil eye steadily on our friend.

"Well, I have no objection to that," assented our hero.

"You bring your oshes 'ere, and I'll 'ave mine ready to schange," said Peter, looking especially wise.

"Very good, very good," replied Mr. Bunting, thinking they would be better without the monster.

"Shaddles, bridles, rollers, rugs, everything," enumerated the man.

"Yes, and I get yours in exchange," observed Mr. Bunting.

"In courshe—in courshe," assented Peter.

"Then say at ten thirty in the morning—ten thirty in the morning punctually," rejoined our hero.

"Ten thirty punc. ish the word," added Peter, keeping his eye steadily on Mr. Bunting's hand, to see if it revisited his waistcoat pocket. But our friend had had enough of that game, and now beat a retreat without further beneficence.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXI.

THE GOLCONDA STATION OF THE GREAT GAMMON AND SPINACH RAILWAY.



ROP received the intelligence of his master's change of horses with the same indifference as he would hear that Bartley had sent a pair of new boots home and wanted the old ones to mend. What he rode was nothing to him, so long as his master was pleased, provided, of course, his mount did not disfigure him. He felt more the severance from pretty Betsy Jane, the barmaid of the Coach and Horses hard by, but by sudden wrench, believing not that

"Hearts could thus be torn away,"

he looked confidently forward to a renewal of their interesting intimacy. Meanwhile he presented her with an eighteen-penny workbox, with a picture of Roseberry Rocks on the lid, and a handsome coloured photograph of himself in a claret-coloured case.

Having then communicated his marching orders to the helpers in the yard, so that they might get his horses ready for him, he next began hissing and packing up his own things, in order to send them along with Mr. Bunting's. Of course he took both first and second class clothes, relays of boots, and everything becoming, little doubting that Burton St. Leger was a place of size and importance. Betsy Jane, indeed, had her misgivings on that point, and much feared he might fall into the hands of the designing. Even in his undress travelling clothes, with the rose-tinted tops obscured with caps, she

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

thought she had never seen anyone so natty and handsome. What a happy woman she would be if she could have a bar of her own under the title of Mrs. Crop. So Crop and she went to the Alhambra Circus together that evening, and after a soothing glass of rum and milk in the morning, he tore himself away from her auburn ringlets. He then repaired to the Mews, where he found his master waiting to receive him. The bill was paid, the horses were quickly turned out, everything becoming, and Crop received the last compliment of the yard in the shape of a leg up, while another helper handed him his led horse, and, after the usual bumpings and jerkings, he got settled into his saddle, and with parting adieus put his horses in motion, and presently passed off the pavement of the Mews on to the macadam of May Fair.

They were nice looking horses as they now stepped freely along; one a bay—called the Bard, on which Mr. Bunting is depicted careering over the Downs to the Pic Nic; the other a brown, called the Kitten, of much the same cut and calibre. Horses, servant, saddles, clothing, were altogether a very creditable turn out. So thought Mr. Bunting, as Crop now aggravated them into a trot, and our friend jumped into a perambulating Hansom to follow and see that all went on right at the place of exchange. Crop's instructions were to go to 51A, Sligo Mews, Rochester Square, there to exchange horses, and then proceed at once to the Golconda Station, where Mr. Bunting would meet him. Now, however, Mr. Bunting thought he would just follow him in view, and abandoning his cab in the Square, take a peep round the corner, to be ready in case of requirement. Crop knowing the town as well as any cabman, went jerking by all the short cuts and by-ways, was presently in the denoted region. As luck would have it, he entered Rochester Square on the east side, which led to the 51A end of Sligo Mews. Being a tolerably quick fellow at finding addresses, he soon saw by Matthew Andrew's darting in at the door as Crop rounded the corner where the stable was, and ere he reached it, Owen Ashford came popping out in charge of the lad, followed by the Exquisite led by old one-eye.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Crop coming up then dropped from the Bard, jockey fashion, who was immediately slapped into the stable, followed by the Kitten, and Crop was instantly hoisted upon Owen Ashford, and the leading-rein of the Exquisite passed into his hand. He then proceeded to jerk and jag them into motion, Peter and Andrew retreating into the stable the moment their horses had left the door. Though the exchange was effected as quickly as possible, not two minutes being consumed in the operation,

“ all the white bonnets were over the border ”

again, and John Crop was honoured with a perfect ovation as he passed up the Mews.

Sally Saunders, the washerwoman, threw an old shoe after him; Billy Booth, the knife-grinder, ceased his discordant noise and grinned extensively; Mrs. Codling, the greengrocer, offered Crop a bushel of apples for his bargain; Jessey Ford and Lucy Grove, the jobbing milliners and dress-makers, clapped their hands and exclaimed, “ Those ’ll be the swells we saw!—those ’ll be the swells we saw! ” While Tomkins, the badgeless cabman, halloed out, “ I say, *sur* ! is your gov’nor fond ’o valking ? ”

Crop jerked his head, and tried to look unconcerned, putting it all down to their low back-woodsman-like ignorance. They knew nothing of May Fair. Meanwhile, Mr. Bunting having seen the exchange effected, regained his cab and drove off to the station to order the horse-box.

The Golconda Station of the Great Gammon and Spinach Railway, as the reader—at all events the shareholders are well aware—was built, as George Robins used to say, “ regardless of expense,” the architect having apparently taken his idea of the edifice from some scene in the Arabian Nights entertainment. Hence, the splendid dividend of two-pence-halfpenny a share, so complacently announced by the chairman, as shown in the picture of “ The Railway Meeting ” in that inimitable work, the “ Manners and Customs of the English.” If poor George Stephenson had ventured to shadow forth such a gigantic structure in the early days of railways, he would



JOHN CROP'S OVATION.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

have been "pooh-pooh'd," and requested not to make a fool of himself, so vast is its space and interminable its limits. No need of mirrors or artificial means to magnify or reproduce its dimensions. It is startling as it stands. Since, however, the dividends, originally pitched at two hundred and fifty per cent., have dwindled down to two-pence-halfpenny, the directors have been endeavouring to rectify their original error by curtailing the working establishment, and instead of having two men—one to help the other to do nothing, as formerly they had—they put the work of two men upon one; so that unless a traveller looks a little to himself, he stands a chance of being only indifferently served. If the majority of railways had been constructed with anything like ordinary prudence and economy, they would have been sources of wealth to the shareholders, and the public might have travelled for half what they now do. As it was, it was believed that their resources were boundless, and every species of folly and extravagance was indulged in. That, however, by way of parenthesis.

When Mr. Bunting arrived at the Great Golconda Station, expecting to have a horse-box supplied as quickly as he would a shilling's worth of heads at a club, he found there was a good deal of holloaing and shouting, and shifting of work from one person to another. There is nothing so unbusiness-like as a great deal of noise. At length the little caravan was got up to the tramway, the compartment let down, and the willing horses were punched into the box like bullocks. Up then went the side, and nothing further was seen of Owen Ashford but his eye. Tickets were taken, cabs and carriages began to roll into the yard, and presently the engine came hissing down from its house. Meanwhile Mr. Bunting proceeded to give his parting directions to the groom—fearing before to trust him with two sets at a time. The only difficulty he anticipated was that of the man-boy finding his way from the Curleyford Station, where he had to stop, to Burton St. Leger; to obviate which Mr. Bunting had taken a tracing off the county map on to a piece of foreign letter paper, which he now presented to Crop, pointing out to him what to hit, miss, or avoid, in a very blind-



MR. BUNTING AT THE GREAT GOLCONDA STATION.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

leading-the-blind sort of way. "You'll have no difficulty," said he; "you'll have no difficulty," repeated he, folding the paper, after mystifying himself and giving it to Crop, who forthwith transferred it to his hat along with his kerchief and a slice of bread and cheese.

Just then Mr. Dick Dawdler, who has the same sort of mania for seeing trains start that some gentlemen of old used to have for seeing the mails leave the White Horse Cellar or the Peacock at Islington, strolled up and claimed our hero's acquaintance, almost making him forget, in the midst of Dawdler's sage observations about the weather—what it had been, what it was going to be, what it was last year,—to tell Crop to order him apartments at the Cornwallis Hotel, and have a fly to meet him by the Express train that evening.

The bell then rang. "Take your seats! Please take your seats!" resounded along the platform; late comers rushed frantically in, holloaing out "Stop!" as though they were left behind. A *battue* of doors sounded from end to end, a shrill whistle followed, and away went the long train, hissing and snorting like an exasperated crocodile. The last joint of its tail having disappeared at the turn, porters again stood at ease, strangers retired, and the Golconda Station sunk into a state of temporary repose.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXII.

BURTON ST. LEGER.



BURTON ST. LEGER was a large place, or rather a small one stretched out into a large one, just as a goldbeater hammers a small piece of the precious metal into a large circumference, or a little moth of a woman distends herself into a hay-stack with crinoline. It was a longitudinal square, bisected with gravelly cross-roads, round whose spacious green area some spirited individual had planted unhappy-looking limes, in hopes of seeing them emulate the large oaks and elms with which the town, or rather village, outskirts were surrounded. These were now made more visible in leafless winter by the spars and thorns with which their stems were encased to protect them from the cattle and idle boys. The town being purely agricultural, the houses and cottages stood at respectful distances from each other; each seeming to be what the villa agents call "self-contained," instead of huddled together, dependent on one another for support. There cannot, perhaps, be a greater contrast to the new thatched, now blue-roofed, now stone-slatted miscellany of houses and cottages constituting a real straggling country village than the long monotonous repetitions of dwellings containing a window, a numbered door, and a peep-hole, peculiar to a mining one. The former always look healthy and nice, while the latter too often present a combination of mud, tawdry squalor, and unbecoming finery. Burton St. Leger was a real country place, where the women wore bedgowns and went to the well themselves, instead of sending

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

those wretched children-servants the mining population so delight to employ.

After the pear-tree covered parsonage, and the red-brick fox-hunting farmer, Mr. Buckwheat's residence, the Lord Cornwallis Inn was decidedly the most imposing-looking house in the place, being bow-windowed and blue-roofed, with white rails set in the stone coping of a low wall in front. Here on a summer's evening the rural parliament would assemble and talk over matters quite as important to them as those that are discussed at St. Stephen's—how Mrs. Manby managed her husband ; how Luke Brown had been out poaching again ; how Giles Summerbell had got forty shillings for his barley, while Tom Crosier had “nabbut getten” thirty-eight, and other equally important rural and agricultural matters. In the old ploughing days of posting, the Lord Cornwallis Inn was a sleeping house, and many great people have reposed in its old tapestried state apartment ; but when roads began to mend, people found they could run through from High Green to Mayfield, and the Marquisate business began to decline. First his lordship's cocked hat and wig on the sign went, then his coat, and lastly the effigy, like the Marquisate itself, disappeared altogether.

The name of the house, at the time of our tale, was only represented by a once sparkling blue board, having on it the following inscription in somewhat lack-lustre letters :—

MATTHEW MULDOON,
LICENSED VICTUALLER,
JOB AND POST MASTER.
NEAT WINES, NEAT POSTCHAISES, &c.

But though the name of the master appeared on the sign, the business of the house was, in fact, entirely conducted by his

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

wife, Mrs. Muldoon, Matty having long retired from business and devoted himself entirely to drinking—being always to be found at the receipt of custom in the bar, with his clay-pipe, ready to give or take glasses with anyone. The taste for giving “glasses” among the lower orders seems to correspond with that of giving dinners among the higher ones, many people being willing to give glasses and dinners who would be very sorry to give the other party the money the glasses or dinners would cost. The dinners we can understand, because there is the gratification of display ; but what pleasure there can be in seeing human beings reduce themselves to a level with the animal creation, by gulping down glass after glass of liquid fire, does seem to us to be rather incomprehensible.

Nevertheless, Matty was always at it: never incapacitated by the quantity he had taken, but as ready to accept the hospitality of the last man as he had been of the first. Thus he had gone on year after year for many years, and though his corporation had increased and his legs spindled, while his face had assumed a more mulberry-like hue, yet people said the drink did him “ne harm,” he was “se used to it” ; and as the doctrine was a convenient one, Matty thought not either. So he sotted and drank for the good of the house and the bad of himself—a practice not so common now as it was a few years since.

Taking the general range of country inns, however, we may say that the same division into which the old butler threw his master’s malt liquor, and we threw the lawyer’s, may describe the whole range of them, namely, ale, table, and lamentable. The George at Melton, the Station at York, the Bedford at Brighton, and a few others that do not immediately occur to us, are ale, but by far the greater number are only “table,” and very, very many “lamentable.” In fact there is no branch of our rural economy that requires more revision and amendment than the country inns ; in fact there is no economy about them at all. The large comfortable old posting-houses that existed prior to railways have all disappeared or been converted into schools or convents, or such like purposes.

At one of these a man with his horses could live very

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

comfortably during the hunting season. The landlords were generally sportsmen themselves, and also large farmers, so that there was a stroll over the farm at all events, if not a little shooting to occupy a non-hunting day, while the constant expectation of travellers, the *tinkle, tinkle, tinkle* of the ostler's bell, with the commotion consequent on the long traces, the handing-up of the smoking glass to the green-veiled maid in the rumble, with the grand ærial sweep of the landlord's hat, as the quickly-changed ploughmen post-boys climbed on to their horses and whipped away with their cargoes, with the commentaries of the now left-behind ones on the travellers' liberality, all helped to beguile the tedium of the time. Those houses have all disappeared, or if any remain, are dragging out miserable existences, with weak worn-out establishments, women waiters, and either antediluvian ostlers or ignorant hobbledehoys, fresh at each quarter, who hardly know how to put on a bridle, and who, after staring at a stranger on horseback, ask him if he wants him "put oop." Then to see them whip off the saddle, let the horse be ever so hot, and dash in the corn as quick as they can get it—giving him what they call "a lick and a promise," instead of cleaning him—all irritate the man who knows how a horse should be attended to.

And here we may observe that ostlers are generally either very quick clever men, or very slow useless ones ; we seldom meet a medium man in the situation of ostler, though we meet with a great many brandy-nosed bad ones. Some of the good ones are marvellously active in their habits. In the old coaching days we knew a man who looked after twenty-five coach-horses and harness, with the aid of only one helper, and did the general stable business of the house into the bargain. But then he was a man who was always at work, never lounging at street corners or popping into the inn-bar to see what o'clock it was. Third-rate country inns in England are deplorable places. Keen must be the British sportsman, or desperately in love the man who can stay long at one of these gristly, tough mutton houses for the purpose of hunting or courting, or even for a combination of both.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

There is no resemblance to civilization in anything about them, save the bill, that is generally a famous one. Six shillings a bottle, or rather three-quarters of a bottle, of the earthiest sherry; eight shillings a bushel for oats; and servant's keep, out of all comprehension. A master should always put his servant on extra board-wages before going to an inn, or he will pay double for what the man would himself get for one-half. Considering that the rule is for the groom to have a bed for nothing where there are horses, very little extra should do it, seeing that an innkeeper can victual a party of servants at two shillings a day each, or three shillings a day where there is only one.

Of course there are some innkeepers who will exclaim on reading this, "It can't be done, some one has written this who knows nothing of the requirements of gentlemen's servants;" but we beg to say that we had the information from one of themselves, therefore it may be taken to be true. If they cannot board grooms for a guinea a week, how, let us ask, does it happen that a farm-hind will board a stout ploughman for six shillings a week, and make money by it too? It is no advantage to a master to have his servant eating veal cutlets or lamb's fry for breakfast; he wants him fed like his horses for useful work, and the man would not order such dainties if he was paying for himself; he would have his money's worth of good wholesome food, and if the innkeeper would not supply him at reasonable prices, he would soon find plenty of people about who would. The groom would thus pocket something a week for himself, and the master would also save by the arrangement, for if he gives the groom his head he will soon eat him a couple of pounds a week at inn-keepers' prices. Horses, too, are terribly over-charged at inns, which prevents sportsmen going to them if they can by any possibility avoid it.

We have before us two bills, one for three horses for a week at a country inn, amounting to 4*l.* 12*s.* 3*d.*, exclusive of the expectations of the ostler; the other for the cost of two horses standing ten weeks in a private stable, amounting to 5*l.* 14*s.* 8*d.* A gentleman of our acquaintance, being presented with his

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

stable-bill on the morning of his departure from an inn, intending to hunt his way home, was surprised to find that his horses had eaten four bushels of oats a week each, exclusive of hay, bran, beans, and other *et ceteras*, making the bill up to about double what he expected, 13*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*, whereupon he had a long conference with the Boniface, who at length generously agreed to take off the odd eighteen-pence ; whereupon our sportsman proceeded to the meet, and had the satisfaction of hearing that the hounds had found their fox immediately and gone right away, nobody knew where. So he saved his eighteen-pence and lost his hunt.

Still sportsmen like touring, and would tour very considerably if they could only get moderately housed at anything like reasonable rates ; but the present system is almost a bar to locomotion. It is not that sportsmen object to paying inn bills where the accommodation is good, but that they object to pay the price of good accommodation for very bad. Nevertheless we must bring our friend Mr. Bunting down from the elegancies of the Polyanthus Club to take his chance at the Marquis of Cornwallis Hotel and Posting-house at Burton St. Leger. But first we must get his stud there.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE LORD CORNWALLIS INN.



T was a dull winter's day, with a cold rain beating right into the pit of his stomach, that a coat-collar-turned-up groom was seen working a couple of tuck-tailed horses round Barnfather's Corner, asking his way to Burton St. Leger. This was our friend Mr. Crop, who, after a variety of perils by rail and by road, had at length advanced thus far into the bowels of the land, wondering when his journey would end, when his question, "How far is it to Burton St. Leger?" caused Morrison, the foot Post-messenger, to whom it was addressed, to pause and stare with astonishment at the idea of anybody not knowing Burton St. Leger.

"How far!" exclaimed he, eyeing Crop with incredulous suspicion—"how far! Why *this* be it, to be sure!"

"Oh, this is it, is it?" replied our Cockney friend, half-glad at the termination of his journey—half-shocked at the desolate appearance of the place, no flags, no gas, no cabs, no 'bus, no nothing; only a large green with a flock of geese on a pond in the centre.

"Then please where be the Markis Cornwallis Inn?" asked Crop, eyeing the scattered assortment of houses and cottages in the vista.

"The Cornwallis Inn be the great white house on the right there," replied Morrison, pointing towards it; "there," continued he, "where the man has just come out from under the entry."

"Thank ye," replied Crop, getting his horses in motion again and trotting up to the indicated quarter.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

There stood a man in an old badger-skin cap, with a cadaverous countenance and desperately sore eyes, whose dirty fustian clothes might be improved, but could not possibly be spoiled, by the rain, of which, indeed, he seemed quite regardless, as with his hands in his tattered trouser-pockets he gazed, first up the street and then down, in the usual style of utter vacuity. Seeing horses approaching, he thought the rider might stop for a glass, in which case he would perhaps get something for holding them; so as their rounding heads showed which way they were coming, he stepped a little aside, to give them the shelter of the entry. But Crop passed under the arch into the narrow stable-yard beyond, the clatter of the horses' feet on the pavement disturbing Mr. Muldoon over his glass, and bringing the man of the fustians up the yard to see what was wanted. This was the ostler, Sore-eyed Sam as he was familiarly called, a wonderful fellow for shuffling off work and making excuses, a sort of performance that a man who is good at is seldom good at anything else.

"Where's the bell! where's the ostler's bell!" exclaimed Crop, looking wistfully round at the wretched, unspouted, red-tiled buildings, so unlike what he had left in the morning.

"I be the ostler, I be the ostler," replied Sam, shuffling up to Crop's knee, adding, "What may you please to want?"

"Horses put up, to be sure," replied Crop, wondering at anybody asking such a question.

"Put up," repeated Sam, scratching his uncombed head; "put up—whoy be ye goin' to stop here?"

"Why, yes—till my master comes at all events," replied Crop, muttering, "I don't think we'll stop long after that."

The wretched creature then rubbed his red eyelids, thinking how he could best shuffle through the matter. He was not prepared for anything of the sort—he had a cow and a donkey in the two-stall stable, a Crosskill roller, a sow and pigs, and half a ton of hay in the three-stall one, and the old mare occupied as much of the long stable as was water-tight.

"If you'd ha' com'd yesterday," said Sam, staring, "I could ha' done for you nicely."

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"Well, but I've come to-day, so stir yourself and get things ready, for my master will be here in no time," replied Crop, alighting from the now dejected-looking Owen Ashford, and jumping and shaking the wet out of his clothes as he spoke.

"I'm sure I don't know what to do," continued Sam, looking quite bewildered.

"Well, you get the 'osses under cover, and don't stand staring there like a stuck pig," rejoined Crop, thinking what a contrast the wretch was to Mr. le Measurer, the orthodox head of the Haycock Mews, May Fair. "What have you here?" continued Crop, advancing and opening the door of the two-stall stable—"a cow and a donkey!" exclaimed he, adding, "turn them out and put my 'osses in 'ere."

"Well, but where can I put the cow and the ass?" asked Sam.

"Put them where you please," replied Crop, entering and turning them out himself. He then led Owen Ashford in, and the Exquisite followed of his own accord. It was a sad, dirty, cob-webby place, but anything was better than the door on such a day as this. So Crop got them into their stalls, and fastened them up by the heads. "Now where's the man of the house—the Markis of Cornwallis—to be found?" inquired he, returning to the door and dashing the wet from his hat on to the ground.

"The man o' the house is a woman," replied Sam, grinning at his own wit.

"What, a Marchioness is it?" rejoined Crop, equally sharp.

"You can call her what you like," replied Sam, "I calls her the Missus."

"Well, let's have a sight of her," said Crop, "I've got a good many orders to give."

"There she's!" said Sam, nodding to where a little round-about woman was making darkness visible by stirring the fire of a bay-windowed little back room, answering the double purpose of parlour and bar. There were the "Old Tom" and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

the "Old Rum" and the "Old Gin" casks ranged on a shelf against the wall, and there was the old cask of a husband sitting in a semi-circular chair, with his pipe, by the now-refreshed fire.

The Marquis had about got to the time of day when he became

" O'er all the ills of life victorious,"

for he had imbibed his own bottle of brandy and several eleemosynary glasses from parties who had looked in "quite promiscuous," as they say, to have glasses themselves. He was now on the free list with Jack Calcot the cobbler, who had ordered two shilling glasses of "hot with"; and just as Crop opened the sash-door, the Marquis was endeavouring to impress upon Calcot the "great 'spect and 'steem" he had for him, and how Calcot was welcome to the loan of his donkey any day or any hour—the Marquis nearly melting himself into tears, and blinking severely at the beaker of brandy as he spoke.

Crop's appearance at the door rather interrupted the protestations of friendship, and drew all eyes to where he stood.

"Rooms for a gentleman and his valet," now announced Crop from the door, in the usual style of London laconics.

"Heigh day!" exclaimed the Marchioness of Cornwallis, starting and bustling up, as if touched with a reminiscence of former times. "What was it you said?" exclaimed she, hurrying up to where Crop stood with the door in his hand, surveying the cheerful scene—good fire, round table, and glasses all round.

"Rooms for a gentleman and his valet," repeated Crop, adding, "and a fly to meet him by the Express."

"Fly!" ejaculated the Marchioness—"Fly! there's not such a thing in the place."

"Well, a covered conveyance of some sort," rejoined Crop, supposing he must do the best he could under the circumstances.

"Covered conveyance of some sort," repeated the Marchioness, sticking her hands in her fat sides and thinking matters over.



ON THE FREE LIST.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

She then pulled the string of the ostler's bell outside, which presently brought dirty-shirted Sam to the presence, to whom she communicated the stranger's behests. Sam, like a good many people, would rather be doing any work than his own, and after giving his red eyelids and snub nose an upward rub with his sleeve, he suggested that they might borrow Dr. Catcheyside's little carriage, which he could drive, and then they might get old Tommy Lee to come into the yard to look arter the 'osses.

This suggestion being approved of, Sam was despatched on the double mission, while the Marchioness summoned her pretty maid-of-all-work, Rebecca Mary, to consult her about carrying out the domestic arrangements. Rebecca Mary was the belle of Burton St. Leger, a pretty smiling, blue-eyed, fair-haired maid, who, notwithstanding a host of other suitors, had to undergo the persecution of Sore-eyed Sam. No sooner did Crop see her smart little clean-aproned figure than, with the susceptibility of his master, he almost became reconciled to the discomforts of the place—this, too, in spite of auburn-ringlets and the other attractions of the Coach and Horses. So he withdrew with the ladies into the kitchen, leaving Old Muldoon to renew his protestations of “'spect and 'steem” for Mr. Calcot, and offer the loan of his donkey “any day or any hour” as before.

The adjourned debate was then resumed before the kitchen fire, away from the observations and running commentary of the drunkards. Most women have some peculiar ideas of their own about comfort; some think half-roasting people alive is comfort, some that a fine tea-pot is comfort, others that a fine row of chimney-ornaments—shells, spars and fossils—is comfort, while Mrs. Muldoon went altogether upon fine linen. If there were only fine sheets and pillow-cases to the bed, and a handsome toilette-cover to the dressing-table, she thought it made no matter what other things were like. The fowl might be stringy, the ham hard, pale, and indigestible, the eggs limey, and the toast tough; but if the linen was snowy all the rest would do.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

So, having learnt all she could from Mr. Crop about his master's greatness and intentions, she produced the key of the beloved linen chest to make the necessary selection, while Rebecca Mary lighted the fires, and Crop returned to his neglected horses in the sorry stable, there to see old Tommy Lee fumbling and dribbling at the dressing.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXIV.

MR. BUNTING ARRIVES AT BURTON ST. LEGER.



Riding a Burster.

It was a great boon to the sporting world when railways enabled them to follow their callings in distant countries,—the shooter to fly down to the Highlands, the fox-hunter to move about with his horses, taking a hunt wherever he liked, instead of the old weary five-and-twenty or thirty miles a day trail by the road, with the rest required at the end of the journey. Then when the groom's tardy letter arrived, saying the horses were safe, and the hounds at so-and-so, there was the clear day

necessary for giving him his orders, with the uncertainty of getting a seat by the coach, and the withdrawal from all the occupations of life for the one pursuit that a change of the weather might prevent. As the long looked for day approached, how anxiously the weather was studied, and references made to former seasons. What was so mortifying to a packed-up Londoner rushing out of town at night, as seeing the ominous champagne-glass-like rind on the shop windows, as he hurried along to the coach office, Hatchett's or the White Horse Cellar,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

say, and finding as he got off the stones the first freezing breath of a frost spread over the road that gradually ripened into blackness as they proceeded, stopping the up-shot of the wheels as the coach rolled noisily over the hard surface, the guard aggravating his discomfiture by apparently superfluous *twang, twang, twangs* of the horn. Or, again, our friend having got to his journey's end, with a few hours left for a thaw between the sheets prior to dressing for hunting, to be aroused to the fact that the country was half-a-foot under snow! No help for it but to stay on in hopes of a change, or undergo the toil and trouble of a return journey. Now, if a sportsman is stopped by the weather he just shoots back again, with as much ease as the sporting cockney of old used to make the return journey from Croydon. But we are receding in our progress, and must be getting our hero down into the country.

If Mr. Bunting had been bent solely on hunting he would have felt as many a man has felt who goes from home for that purpose, that the trouble was greater than the pleasure—that in fact there is nothing like hunting from home. The little station he stopped at, the little carriage he got into, the deep jolting cross roads he had to encounter, above all, the gloomy aspect of Burton St. Leger, and the dismal desertion of the Lord Cornwallis Inn, would have brought his sporting ardour down quickly to zero, and made him wish himself back at the Poly-anthus Club. As it was, however, the near approach to the land of the fair lady invested each scene with a charm, just as gallant Don Quixote turned all his troubles and disasters into glory.

The Cornwallis Inn was really very nice, the rooms were really very good, the tablecloth was very clean, the castors, those excellent criterions of comfort, were well supplied, and if the old landlord did smoke bad tobacco, that might be easily remedied by getting him some good. Fortunately, too, Rebecca Mary had somewhat reconciled Crop to his quarters, so there was no one to grumble but Bonville the valet, who received the usual attention that a man does who speaks broken English.

A sportsman of the old school on arriving at his quarters would have repaired to the stable to see how his horses were lodged,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

but that sort-of-thing has exploded, and the poor creatures are now left a good deal to chance and the care of the groom.

Now that is all very well where a groom is a groom, but as not one in ten calling himself so really is one, the personal inspection cannot be safely dispensed with. However, Mr. Bunting did dispense with it, and busied himself with his own delectable self, and in speculating on his charmer, and the probable success of his trip. He wondered where he would meet with her first—he wondered how she would receive him—he wondered how Mamma would receive him—he wondered how they would look. He wondered if the fat boy was still in attendance—he wondered whether the fat boy's father was rich—he wondered whether Privett Grove was the McDermott's own—he wondered how they got it—he wondered whether it was a pretty place. He thought he would ride Owen Ashford over the next day and see. And so amidst a world of musing pleasant meditations, he sat at a very white-ash-burning fire, and sipped the best part of a pint of earthy sherry, ere he retired to the heavy-tapestried low four-post bed, and the enjoyment of the fine linen. Thus, amidst pleasant dreams and anticipations of the morrow, our too susceptible hero passed a very tranquil night. Even in the morning when he arose, and a too truthful sun revealed the real poverty and dilapidation of the place, the grass growing on the road, almost up to the inn door, the ghosts of trees haunting the spacious green, he took courage, and thought of the summer glories of Roseberry Rocks, the mysteries of muslin and gossamer dresses. Then, when after breakfast Mrs. Muldoon, arrayed in a dyed-brown silk dress, came, smoothing her black satin machinery-laced apron, in at the door, to hope he had "slept" well, and to inquire what he would like to have for dinner, he availed himself of the opportunity of having a word with her on the locality of Burton St. Leger generally. And a better person he could not have applied to, for in addition to good local knowledge, she had great powers of gossip, and knew the history of every house in the neighbourhood, as well as any registry-office keeper. How there was company at the castle, how there was a great Prince with an immense retinue of

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

servants staying there, how they had had a great gunning match, where they had killed three hundred brace of pheasants, and two hundred hares, and how there were to be other great doings. Then descending to more ordinary mortals, she informed him that the large stone house he saw on the opposite hill was Freeland's Lawn, Squire Springfield's, that two of the young ladies there were going to be married; then from Freeland's Lawn she got to Somerville Tower on the other side of the river where she said there were three beautiful girls with very large fortunes; thence, by a skilful manœuvre, Mr. Bunting brought her round to Mayfield, and managed to draw up to Miss Rosa through the medium of Goldspink's bank.

"Did she know Goldspink's bank?" he asked, as though he had some of its notes, or a letter of credit upon it.

"Know Goldspink's bank!" repeated Mrs. Muldoon in a tone of astonishment at the idea of anyone asking such a question, "Know Goldspink's bank! I should think everybody knew Goldspink's bank with its fi-pun notes."

"What, it's a good bank, is it?" asked Mr. Bunting, with apparent unconcern.

"Good enough, I dare say," replied the hostess, "Good enough," as if she had no great opinion of it either. Sivin and four had charged ten and a-half per cent. for discounting one of old Matty's bills, during the hard times, hence her displeasure.

"Rich?" asked Mr. Bunting, in a tone of indifference.

"Oh, rich, aye, rich enough, my w-o-r-d, they know how to make money there; but if I mistake not, the young 'un will spend some of it for them one of these days."

"What, there's a son is there?" asked Mr. Bunting, as if he had never heard of him before. "Is he a partner?" added he.

"No, partner, no!" sneered Mrs. Muldoon, "they hadn't need take such bodies as him into banks. He's just a young wild ne'er-do-well sort of a body.

"What does he do?" asked our hero, warming with his subject.

"Do!" sneered Mrs. Muldoon, "Do! he's always doing

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

some foolish act or another ; they say he's lost a vast of money by gambling, and now he's taken up with a low fellow to go upon the turf. My w-o-r-r-d, but they'll clear him out there. He'd better let that alone."

"Who has he taken up with ?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"Oh, you'll know nothing about him, you'll know nothing about him," replied Mrs. Muldoon. "He was a dirty ragged boy only the other day, and now he's dressed out in finger rings, and an Albert chain, and calls for hock and sober water."

"What fun!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, seeing who the gentleman was she was imitating.

"Fun! I see no fun in it," replied Mrs. Muldoon. "I like to see people 'sociate with their equals, and not with such rubbish as this boy does."

"Why don't they get him married?" asked Mr. Bunting, well knowing that the ladies consider matrimony a cure for everything.

"Well, they did talk about that too," replied Mrs. Muldoon, smoothing her apron, and gathering her recollections, "they did talk about that too, and to a very pretty girl : but somehow I think he's not a-going to make anything of it."

"Why not ?" inquired our now anxious friend.

"Why not !" replied Mrs. Muldoon, "Why not ! Well in the first place, he's been such a long time about it ; in the second place, they have been brought up too much together like ; and in the third—though this is strictly confidential, having had it from her maid—Miss has been away from home this summer, and picked up another beau—a fine gentleman, with large——"

Just as the conversation got to this interesting point, Crop, after a tap at the thin back door, popped his sleek head into the room to ask if his master had any orders for him, whereupon Mrs. Muldoon withdrew, leaving them to arrange matters together ; and Crop's report of the horses being somewhat favourable—at all events not prohibitory—our friend determined to sally out in quest of adventure as soon as they could be got ready. Who knows, thought he, but kind fortune might

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

lead him in Miss Rosa's way, at all events he would reconnoitre the country, and be better prepared for the coming campaign.

So with the aid of Bonville, he accomplished a radiant costume, and with palpitating heart took his place before the fire there to await the trampling of the horses to call him away. As ill luck, however, would have it, the too brilliant morning sun had suddenly become obscured with dull leadeny clouds, and just as Mr. Bunting was consulting his diminutive watch to see what time it was, a sudden bash of sleet dashed across the window, as if some idle boy had thrown a handful of peas against it. And when our friend went into the bay to see what it really was, such a driving storm rebounded from the ground, as gave little hopes of amendment. Here, then, was a pretty predicament for a club gentleman from town, with nothing to amuse him but the inscriptions on the panes—the "Martha Bakers'" and "Betsy Jones'" of former service, or the fervid effusion of poetical bagman. No books, no papers, no billiards, nothing but the old paste and scissors *Mayfield Mercury* parading its list of agents, and "enormous circulation," with price currents, and an elegant assortment of quack doctors' advertisements.

However, there was no mistake about the day—it was final and conclusive. Not the most sanguine young lady, bent on her first ball, could see any hopes in that heavy horizon. The atmosphere looked as if it might be wrung out like a wet sheet. So, with a sigh, Mr. Bunting cast his hat peevishly on the horse-hair sofa, inwardly wishing that Crop had kept out of the room. And it is a remarkable fact, that though he presently sought another interview with his landlady, and tried her in a variety of ways, he could not get her to resume the interrupted conversation. Whether her womanly wit had suggested that this stranger might be the young banker's rival, or Mrs. Muldoon was indebted to Bonville or to Crop for the information, or whether Miss Perker's confidential communication had returned more vividly to her recollection on getting down-stairs is immaterial, she would go to any place rather than Mayfield, and talk of any person rather than either young or old Goldspink.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

So our friend had to discuss the mutton chop beef steak, beef steak mutton chop question, without the piquant sauce that subject would have given the object of his choice. One thing however consoled him, namely, that Miss Perker had spoken well of him, which showed that the pink satin scarf had not been misapplied. So having got all the information he could out of Mrs. Muldoon, he at length let her withdraw to carry out his orders and respond to the repeated tap, tap, taps of her drunken husband on the round table. Meanwhile the wind blew, the rain beat, and the whole aspect of the firmament denoted a hopelessly wet afternoon. So our friend was thrown on his own resources, aided by *Patteson's Itinerary*, and a very old copy of *Cary's Cross Roads*.

But stay ! we did the old *Mayfield Mercury* injustice with regard to its contents, for, in addition to the leading articles before-mentioned, it gave the meets of the hounds, from which Mr. Bunting gleaned that the Duke of Tergiversation was not the lord paramount of the country, for while His Grace's pack only figured as a two days a-week one, the hounds of another gentleman, namely, those of Mr. Jovey Jessop, hunted four ; and though Jovey's meets were generally wide of Burton St. Leger, yet when the Duke was at home and wanted his guests well galloped, Jovey hunted the east side of his county, in return for Baxterley Woods and other covers that the Duke gave him,—that is to say, let him draw,—for the Duke, early in life, had promised his mother never to give anything away, and most rigidly adhered to his word. And now, as, we are sorry to say, the tempestuous weather that greeted our hero continued unremittingly during the whole of the first, and also of the following day, we will here take advantage of the opportunity of introducing Mr. Jessop, with a certain peculiar appendage of his, to our readers.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXV.

MR. JOVEY JESSOP AND HIS JUG.



R. JOVEY JESSOP, as his name would almost indicate, was a good fellow—a thorough sportsman, and a hearty hospitable man. His fault perhaps was in being rather “too good” a fellow, a failing, however, that tells against a man himself and not against his friends, and one that the world is always happy to overlook. The supply of good fellows is by no means in excess of the demand. A man has only to hoist the flag of hospitality to insure a very considerable amount of custom. So it was with Mr. Jessop. Coming into a large fortune on reaching years of indiscretion, and having undergone the depredations of the O’Dicey tribe, he presently ascertained that hunting was his forte, and took to it accordingly. He began with that best of instructors, a pack of harriers, and having mastered the rudiments of scent, as much as that puzzling phenomenon can be mastered (for, after all is said and done, all the learning in the world will not make a scent), he gave his harriers away and took to foxhounds.

Getting a country is now a very easy matter, the next great social science to scent being that of getting one’s sport out of other people’s pockets. So Mr. Jessop had many countries offered him, all either richly endowed with subscriptions or presenting great local advantages. His first was the well known Rough and Ready-shire, where the subscriptions collapsed nearly one-half in collection, added to which, the few subscribers who did pay considered themselves entitled to have the hounds to adorn their lawns the morning after they

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

had had two soups, two fishes, &c., on the table. Mr. Jessop not caring to be a servant, soon gave it up, and finding that a nominal subscription was in reality worse than none, resolved to hunt the next country he took at his own expense, an arrangement that gave great satisfaction to the squires of his present one, more especially as Mr. Jessop was a good-looking young bachelor who might make a permanent settlement in the country. He took Appleton Hall, a large, rambling old place, the owner of which had raced himself to the door, leaving the house and all about it in a sad state of dilapidation. If, however, the beds were hard and the furniture scant and shabby, there was no fear of a powdered and pink silk stockinged footman meeting a returning sportsman at the foot of the stairs with a boot-jack and slippers to prevent his harming it, and as a good fox makes any country good, so a good cook makes any house comfortable. And a capital cook Mr. Jessop kept—two, indeed ; an Englishman to cook his beefsteak for breakfast, and a Frenchman to send up the fricandeau, &c., for dinner.

Here Mr. Jessop exercised a great amount of hospitality—more, indeed, than was good for him, but which is difficult to stop when a man once begins—guests succeed guests, the man of last year likes to come this, and so, what with one and another, a host has a hard time of it. Bachelor houses may be very independent, but there is always this objection about them, that there is no break in the evening, and men sit longer after dinner than they otherwise would. In addition to this, Mr. Jessop had some capital port, fine, rich, ruby, silky wine, that connoisseurs would give any money for, and wine-merchants, if they had any, would not know how many expletives to put before it in their lists. What was more, he had a good stock of it, and Ambrose, the butler, always knew that the convulsive shake of the wire in his pantry (for the dining-room bell wouldn't always ring) meant “wine,” and in he came with a bottle accordingly.

The consequence of all this was that Mr. Jessop was somewhat in the position of the man at the fight, where the rule was, “one down, t'other come on,” for as fast as he spoiled the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

digestion of one man, a fresh one appeared to supply his place. So our host was kept at it from week's end to week's end, and though it is said that notwithstanding all the deleterious compounds they put into their insides, nobody ever saw a bilious post-boy, yet the rule did not seem to hold good with foxhunters—for Mr. Jessop, though not yet in the prime of life, not only began to be rather pink about the nose, but to have some disagreeable internal sensations, which, not yielding to the treatment of the country apothecary, he just put himself into the express train one non-hunting day, saying that he was going up to Mason's to look at a horse, and, arrived in town, he went sneaking along all the by-streets to the great Dr. David Whitlow's gloomy, dirty-windowed old house, so conspicuous an object in C—— Square, hoping none of his acquaintance would see him and imagine there was anything the matter with him. In fact, he didn't look as though there could be anything the matter with him, for he was a tall, stout, fresh-complexioned young man, scarcely turned of thirty, with bright hazel eyes, and clustering brown hair, who walked as though he could never tire; but, as the child told its nurse, when assuring it it was not hurt, after a fall, "Ou can't feel me, ou knows," so Mr. Jessop knew better than anybody else what his internal sensations were; and this observation will apply to many other people whom the stout healthy world calls fanciful. Mr. Jessop having gone at the Doctor's dirty door just as he would at the Whissendine or any other brook, was speedily let in by a queer-looking little old fellow, dressed in a red-striped livery vest, a blue drab coat with dim-centred brass buttons, and black shorts above gray worsted stockings, with absentee calves, whose Lynx-like eyes, set in an almost entirely hair-denuded head, saw at a glance who were good for a tip, and who might be done out of their turns. Seeing the hale comely person of our foxhunter, he immediately, after getting him in, began expressing his regret that there were so many visitors before him, a dissertation that Mr. Jessop cut short by showing him a half-crown, and telling him it should be his if he got him in the next turn.

"If you'll favour me with your card, I'll see what I can do,"

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

whispered the man, eyeing the money, whereupon Mr. Jessop handed him one of his best double-glazed pieces of pasteboard, and was then ushered into the dismal, seedy-carpeted dining-room, among sundry valetudinarians in various stages of languor and debility. Men with white faces, men with yellow faces, men with blue faces, men with green faces, men with every description of face other than pleasant insurable ones. Jessop started, for it was like getting into a morgue, the contrast was so great to the mirthful, healthy red-coated customers he was in the habit of seeing. The room, too, was dull and gloomy, the straggling rays of the winter's sun being about excluded by a too liberal allowance of old purple-bordered drab window-curtains. On the long green baize-covered dining-table lay a couple of penny papers, while sundry reports and subscription-lists of hospitals and charitable institutions were scattered around, which the restless patients took up and threw down again, hardly knowing what they were doing. It has been said that the time spent in a lawyer's outer office waiting for an audience is about the most unprofitable part of a man's existence, but the great Doctor's waiting-room is a more fearful ordeal, for the lawyer merely deals in dross, while the Doctor deals out life and death, some of them, we are sorry to say, rather abruptly.

If Mr. Jessop had gone to the great house of call for sportsmen—Tattersall's yard—he would have been hailed half a dozen times before he got up to the box, but here he thought there was no chance of meeting any one he knew. In this, however, he was mistaken. Crouched between the sideboard and the cellaret sat a man muffled up in a green shawl cravat, and a gray fur-collared boat cloak shading a sallow face, wrinkled and compressed into something like Cambridge biffin.

“Jessop, my b-o-u-y, how are you?” gasped a sepulchral voice, with a forced attempt at hilarity from over the fur collar.

Mr. Jessop stood aghast.

“What! don't you know me?” asked the speaker, peevishly, slightly lowering his green muffler from before his mouth—
“Scudder, Jack Scudder,” muttered he, holding out a lean

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

clammy hand for Jessop to shake. It was indeed a cold repulsive grasp, and like most men with unhealthy hands, he gave the shakee a good benefit of it.

"Why, what's happened?" asked Mr. Jessop, now endeavouring to reconcile the dry haggard features of the invalid with the once bright cheerful countenance of Jack Scudder, whose red-coat laps had often been distended before him flying over the leaps in a run—"What's happened?" repeated he, with a tone of concern—"what's happened, I say?"

"Oh, nothing 'ticklar, nothing 'ticklar," muttered Scudder, replacing his wraps, "only," continued he, drawing Mr. Jessop towards him, and adding confidentially in his ear, "I can't lush as I used to do—no, by Jove!—I can't lush as I used to do;" Scudder giving a melancholy shake of his head, as if his inability to drink was a national calamity.

Just then the street-door opened and closed on a departing patient, and presently the old servant opened the drawing-room one, and, with a knowing glance of the eye, summoned Mr. Jessop to the presence. Out then our master went, leaving Scudder and the rest of the patients to grumble at the preference.

"Can't lush as I used to do—can't lush as I used to do," repeated Jessop, ascending the spacious old staircase after the servant. "No, by Jove, I should wonder if you could," thought he, conning over the many carouses he had seen in Scudder's company. This brought him before the imitation rosewood door of the consultation room, where his conductor now stood, card in hand, waiting for the promised half-crown. That paid and pocketed, the man opened the door, and advanced with the "Jovey Jessop" card to his master—which having presented, he withdrew.

Dr. Whitlow, or Davy Whitlow as he is commonly called, was one of Nature's rough diamonds, who, despairing of polishing himself up into anything like civilisation, had adopted the Abernethy tack, and was as rough and free spoken as his great prototype. This style, of course, only does for the men, the ladies requiring manner and feeling, while the men rather like

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

those who come to the point, and get through their cases quickly. So Davy used to stare at them, and question them, and bully them, declaring there was nothing the matter with them, or that they had nearly got to the end of their tether, with much the same unconcern either way. Having invested the guinea of the last patient (the shilling in his baggy black and white Tweed trousers pocket, the sovereign in his table-drawer), he was taking a slip-shod turn round the scantily furnished room with his hands in the pockets of his blue flannel dressing-gown, thinking now of his dinner, now of a proposed trip to Ham, when he was presented with the card, our friend closely following, who stood transfixed at the sight of the great bearded hairy monster, into whose hands he was now delivered. He looked more like a lion rampant than a man. Davy, seeing Jessop start, affected surprise too, and throwing himself into attitude with the card in the palm of his extended right hand, fixed his ferrety eyes (almost concealed with hair) steadily upon him, and then exclaimed, with an ominous shake of his great shaggy head, "Ah! I say Mr. Jovey what's your name? If you don't mind what you're arter, you'll very soon be the *late* Mr. Jovey what's your name." So saying, the monster tore the card into quarters, and threw the pieces behind him.

This was not very encouraging, but still did not preclude hope, so Jessop tried to laugh it off, and then endeavoured to draw Davy into a retail consideration of his case.

"Come this way," said the Doctor, laying his hairy paw upon Jessop's arm, and leading him up to the middle window, where a mark in the oil-cloth showed the place for examination. Davy scanned Jessop, and Jessop scanned Davy, and at last Davy spoke.

"Ah, it is as I said, Mr. Jovey what's your name—if you don't put the muzzle on, you'll very soon be the late Mr. Jovey what's your name."

"Well, but if"—ejaculated Jovey.

"You go down stairs, and ask to see Mr. Scudder," interrupted Davy, "and if you'd like to be like Scudder, you'll go

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

on as you're doing; if not, you'll just put the muzzle on, and live till you're eighty. So now give me a guinea; none of your sovereigns, but one pound one, and go," the Doctor holding one hairy paw out for the money, and ringing a little bell with the other. So Mr. Jessop was ejected, and not caring to inquire particularly into Mr. Scudder's ailments, took his departure, much relieved by his visit, inwardly resolving not to emulate him in future. It was not that Mr. Jessop cared about wine, but he cared about company, and he presently hit upon an expedient for having the latter without the inconvenience of the former.

Among the steadiest customers of Appleton Hall—one always ready to come at long or short notice, or stay on if required—was a gentleman of the name of Boyston—Mr. Thomas Boyston, who hunted a little, but did a good deal more in the drinking way. The Boystons of Boyston, in H—shire, are a good old English family, filling a full page of "Burke," even in the compressed form in which he has now potted the Commoners, but Boyston *Père* having left ten children behind him, when the moon came to be cut up into stars there was little left for our Squire but a receivership. So he let Boyston Park, and led a sort of wandering life, now hailing in London, now hunting where he could get a free pack. Our friend Mr. Jessop's being of that description, Mr. Boyston had early taken up with them, and consumed as much Appleton port wine as any two of the hunt. He was quite the reverse of Mr. Jessop, being a dull, heavy, phlegmatic sort of man, who drank for drinking's sake, never leaving a heel tap, and always filling a bumper. His peculiarities consisted in talking in his sleep, and always wearing nankin trousers, both summer and winter;—expensive wear, considering his propensity for sitting cross-legged with his glass on his knee. "I didn't shay I wouldn't take any more wine," he would mutter in his sleep.—"I shaid if any other shentleman would like another bottle I"—awakening himself to consciousness by sluicing his legs with his wine. He was a short, thick, bristly, black headed fellow, who did not seem to feel any ill effects from the drink,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

and it occurred to Mr. Jessop that by having him to live with him all the winter he might go on with his hospitality as before, getting Boyston to bear the brunt of the battle.

So he established him a bachelor bed-room, not over sumptuously furnished, with a couple of stalls for his horses, and made him perpetual vice-president of his table. And the arrangement suited Mr. Boyston uncommonly well, for he not only got capital fare, but rose considerably in the estimation of the ladies, who requested the honour of Mr. Jessop and Mr. Boyston's company, instead of asking Mr. Jessop alone.

And the arrangements answered well in a sanatory point of view also, for in less than a month, the then lately rising rubicund hue had been transferred from Mr. Jessop's nose to that of his guest, whose great harvest-moon face now waxed broader and redder, until it looked as if it had been put into a furnace and blown red-hot. The change was not lost on the ladies, and one day after a dinner-party at Mr. Springfield's, during the interregnum of the drawing-room, the abstemiousness of Mr. Jessop and the rapacity of Mr. Boyston came to be commented upon, when Mrs. Captain Cambo, who was the wit of the party, suggested that Mr. Jessop used Mr. Boyston as a jug to carry away the wine in he couldn't hold himself. And Mr. Boyston's great square figure favouring the idea, it was passed round among the gentlemen when they returned, by whom it was well *haw-haw-hawed*, and pronounced to be extremely good, and thenceforth Mr. Jessop and his Jug became familiar as household words.

Having now introduced parties with whom our hero will presently come in contact, let us return to him at his weather-bound quarters at Burton St. Leger.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXVI.

A SHOCKING BAD SADDLE.



THE next day was as bright and cheerful as its predecessors had been dull and gloomy. Nature would seem to have shed her tears, dried her eyes, and put her pocket-handkerchief away. The sun shone forth with redoubled splendour; the noisy geese went screeching and cackling and clapping their wings over the green to the water; the emancipated pigs roved leisurely about; the sparrows twittered on the eaves; while the fluttering pigeons were here, there and everywhere. It was a fortunate circumstance that the weather had changed, for the Duke of Tergiversation had fixed upon this day to exhibit the prowess of his pack to his illustrious guest the Prince Pirouetteza. To this end all the odd horses had been put in requisition, and all the old yellow coats exhumed from their boxes to put upon helpers and straps, to swell the number and importance of the retinue. Great was the preparation at the Castle—Mr. Haggish alone was moody and thoughtful; for, independently of the noise and mischief of these amateur whips, the loss of his “varra best hound” was generally the result of a show day. However, the Duke willed it so, and Mr. Haggish was obliged to comply.

It was with great satisfaction, after two days’ confinement to the house, that our friend Mr. Bunting arrayed himself in his hunting costume—smart new scarlet, with anonymous buttons, white tops, and leathers to match. He was not one of the “fine old English gentlemen school” of sportsmen, with their

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

queer-cut coats, ugly drabs, and inky pig-jobber-like boots. His was the gay butterfly costume, further enlivened with a heart's-ease, embroidered blue cravat, a pink-striped shirt with carbuncle studs, and a worked buff vest all covered with foxes heads. Having made a middling breakfast, he got on his spurs, and, after a satisfactory survey of himself in the mirror, with palpitating heart went clonk, clonk, clonking down stairs. Arrived in the yard, he gave his whip a crack to announce his approach, when the stable-door flew open, and Owen Ashford's gray head protruded at the portals.

The first thing that struck our friend was that the bridle was very bad. "Oh dear, the bridle was very bad!" That, however, was immediately eclipsed by the saddle, which indeed passed all comprehension. If our excellent coadjutor, Leech, were to draw such a thing, people would say it was a caricature—that such a saddle never was seen. And certainly it bore no affinity to the handsome horse on which it was placed, or to the delicate cream-coloured leathers with which it sought to be invested. It was old and black, and battered and patched, and capped, in almost every part and place—patched, too, in the roughest, coarsest way, with great long dog-teeth-like stitches, instead of the beautiful little sewing that marks the production of the London workman. Even the very seat had given way in the middle and been stitched up into a thing that looked like a map of the lake of Geneva. Oh dear, Mr. Bunting was shocked, the whole being so unlike what were supplied to him by those great masters of arts in Oxford-street, who puzzle their customers so to know "which is which."

"Why, what the deuce have you put these things on for?" exclaimed he, taking the weather-bleached rein of the old Pelham bridle between his finger and thumb.

"They are what I got with the 'osses, sir," replied Crop, eyeing his master's look of disgust.

"But you don't mean to say you've got nothing better than this!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, placing his hand on the lumpy pommel of the variegated saddle, with its frayed unmatching girths.



"CONFOUND THE ANIMAL," GROWLED MR. BUNTING.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"Nothing else for this 'oss, sir," replied Crop.

"Oh dear, you must have made a mistake, and come away with the exercising things!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting.

"They are just what they gave me at the Mews," replied Crop.

"Oh dear, oh dear; but I would never have taken such things," rejoined his master, frowning. "Captain Chichester could never have ridden on such a pack-saddle thing as this," said Mr. Bunting, slapping it, adding, "Couldn't you see what sort of a thing it was?"

"There was a cover over it, sir," replied Crop, popping into the stable and producing one as he spoke.

"Why, the cover's as bad as the saddle!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, throwing it down, adding, "It's clearly a mistake, and they have given you the exercising things—deuced bad uns they are, too."

The question then was, what to do. There stood a swell all ready for hunting, and there stood a horse ready to go if he had but a decent saddle and bridle.

At this juncture sore-eyed Sam, who was as fertile in expedients as he was in excuses, suggested that "p'r'aps Mr. Buckwheat, the sporting farmer, could let them have what they wanted."

"Go and see," replied Mr. Bunting, adding to Crop, "and you be getting the other horse ready in case of accidents."

Crop, without telling his master that the other saddle and bridle were equally bad, then proceeded to strip the Exquisite; but ere he had got him rubbed over and turned round in the stall, Sam returned, bearing a very passable-looking bridle and saddle, which fortunately fitted the gray not amiss, wherewith being invested, Mr. Bunting drew on his other doe-skin glove, and, gathering his whip, proceeded to mount the now greatly improved handsome animal. The important adjustments of seat and stirrups being next accomplished, he then drew rein, and feeling his horse gently with his heel, passed under the archway of the Lord Cornwallis Inn into the open space of Burton St. Leger. Here, as he got a glance of himself in Miss Muslin the milliner's plate-glass window, he thought that Owen

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

Ashford and he looked very well together. With this pleasing conviction he rose in his stirrups, and, putting his horse into a gentle trot, passed up the straggling street, to the great admiration of the women, who drew to their windows as though a telegraphic message had announced his approach. Great was their curiosity to know who he could be. All towns have their attendant toll-bars—the penalty of greatness; and Hooker gate paid, the excitement of observation was over, while a liberal grass siding now enabled our hero to commence an estimate of his mount on Owen Ashford. For this purpose he put along a little quicker, and proceeded to think of him, and him only. The horse was weak under him—weak certainly, Mr. Bunting thought—not the springing elasticity of either the Bard or the Kitten. And now he began to wheeze and cough. “Confound the animal,” growled Mr. Bunting, as he went grunting and wheezing up the green siding, “May have got something into his throat,” thought he, easing him down into a walk. He then became a little better.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXVII.

A SHOCKING BAD HAT.



JUST as Owen Ashford had about coughed himself out, and Mr. Bunting was thinking of setting him agoing again, a start and a half-look round from the horse announced an approach, and presently up trotted a weather-beaten-looking old gentleman, in a shocking bad hat, stained scarlet coat, hard, cracky, uncomfortable-looking cords, and rusty Napoleons, who saluted our hero with a hail fellow well met "Good morning!" as though he had known him all his life. This was Mr. Archy Ellenger, of Kids Hill, a well-known old fox-hunting ferret, who followed the chase more to get into people's houses and to fasten upon strangers than anything else. He had heard of Mr. Bunting's arrival, and had come round by Burnfoot Lane, in order to take him in the rear. Archy was quite a different sort of gentleman to the Jug, for he affected hospitality himself, was always upbraiding people for not breakfasting or coming to him overnight—had such a nice piece of crimped cod and a four-year leg of mutton, to which he would have added a woodcock or a dish of mince pies; but if any one was simple enough to come, Archy would show that he was great at the art of evasion. He lived in furnished lodgings, kept a couple of screws and a shandrydan vehicle to attach to their tails, wherein he scoured the country far and near. Having the reputation of wealth, and no one to leave it to, Archy was everybody's guest, though if many of his hosts had known that he had sunk his where-withal in an annuity, he would not have been quite so welcome.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

There are Archy Ellengers in most countries—forward men who fasten themselves on to strangers, and pretend to introduce them to people whom they hardly know themselves.

The *tout ensemble*, however, was not at all likely to attract such a fastidious gentleman as our friend, and under ordinary circumstances he would have shied him—at all events have shaken him off—before they got to the meet, just as a member of “White’s” gets rid of a rustic at the top of St. James’ Street; but after two days’ solitary confinement there is scarcely anybody that a man can’t put up with. Moreover the horseman’s familiar manner made Mr. Bunting almost think that he had seen him before, but where he couldn’t for the life of him imagine. The face was something like Harry Elstob’s, only more wrinkled; but Harry would be above puckering a crape right up his hat to conceal its shabbiness. The figure was something like Willy Waugh’s, of the Convolvulus Club, but the face didn’t fit; besides, Willy didn’t hunt, so it couldn’t be him. However, there he was, and it was for Mr. Bunting to take him or leave him, as he liked. Mr. Bunting took him. “Good morning,” replied he, returning Mr. Ellenger’s salute, who then followed it up with a “here’s a fine hunting day!”

“It is,” replied Mr. Bunting, “and very acceptable after all the rain.”

“*Very*,” rejoined Ellenger, reining his badly-clipped dun with the familiar black stripe down its back alongside our hero.

Bunting then looked Ellenger over, and Ellenger looked him; Bunting thinking Ellenger was a queer-looking fellow, Ellenger thinking he would like to buy Bunting at his price and sell him at his own.

Bunting then spoke: “How far is it to the meet?—How far is it to the Holly Bush Inn?” asked he.

“Just over the hill—just over the hill,” replied Mr. Ellenger, nodding onward as he spoke, adding, “plenty of time—plenty of time—no fear of being late with the Duke.”

“What, he’s unpunctual, is he?” asked Mr. Bunting.

“Terribly! terribly!” rejoined Mr. Ellenger, adding, “If he

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

was half as keen about beginning as he is about leaving off, he would do."

"Not much of a sportsman then, I presume," observed Mr. Bunting.

"Not a bit of one—not a bit of one," rejoined Mr. Ellenger. "Just keeps hounds for show's sake—just keeps hounds for show's sake. Pack of curs and a red-herring would do quite as well for him."

Mr. Ellenger not having a vote or being otherwise available, was not admissible at Tergiversation Castle; hence his displeasure. He always abused the Duke well behind his back, and toadied him to his face.

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, now went Owen Ashford, again boring with his head to the ground.

"Your horse has got a little cold, I think," observed Mr. Ellenger, when the horse had done.

"I think he has," replied Mr. Bunting, carelessly, "or something in his throat."

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, went the horse again.

"Cold, I should say," continued Mr. Ellenger, drily.

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, repeated the horse, vehemently.

"Deuced like broken wind," muttered Mr. Ellenger to himself.

"Those stables at Burton St. Leger are not to be depended upon," observed he, aloud.

"Arn't they!" replied Mr. Bunting, adding, "What's the matter with them?"

"No trade—no custom—never aired—cold and damp—uncomfortable. Wish I'd known you'd been coming, I'd have got you some good ones at Stobfield or Oldgate."

"Wonder who the deuce you are," again mused Mr. Bunting, looking his companion over—shabby clothes, bad horse, and all. He thought he must have met him before, and yet he couldn't tell where. It wasn't old Hetherington of Berkeley Street, and yet he was very like him.

Cough, wheeze, grunt, cough, again went Owen Ashford, in the most summary manner.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"If that horse is not broken-winded, I'm a Dutchman," observed Mr. Ellenger to himself, eyeing the catch of his flank. However, it was no business of his, and perhaps he was only riding him to cover. "Horse on?" at length asked he, thinking to test it.

"No," replied Mr. Bunting, "just jogging him on myself."

"So am I," rejoined Mr. Ellenger, trying to put a little liveliness into the dun with his off-side spur as he spoke.

Just then two horsemen, one dressed in a bottle-green coat, with a buff vest and white cords, riding a great staring four-year-old bay, the other in fiddle-case boots and red shawl cravat and mufti generally, emerged from Brackenside Lane upon the road our friends were travelling, and were immediately hailed by Ellenger in the patronising way a red-coated man speaks to a dark one.

"Hollo! Jobling!" exclaimed he, addressing the gentleman in green, "what, are you for the fox! How go on the harriers?" Then before the master of Muggers had time to reply, Mr. Ellenger followed up the charge by touching Mr. Bunting on the arm with the crop of his whip, and saying, "Allow me to introduce my friend Mr. Jobling—Mr. Jonathan Jobling, master of the best pack of harriers in the world;" whereupon Mr. Bunting made a bow, and Jobling grinned more complacently than he would have done but for the compliment.

Ellenger then tried to trot Jonathan out, but the hare-hunter saw through him, and without noticing his next inquiry, "How many hares he had killed?" began talking to Mr. Bunting about the wet, the weather, and other indifferent subjects.

The man of the hat then joined the man in mufti, and thus they proceeded in pairs. As they neared the brow of Little Hay Hill, where the Quarry-house toll-bar embraces the four lane ends in its three-halfpenny grasp, Mr. Ellenger bellowed to Mr. Jobling, who was then in advance, "I've got sixpence, Job! I'll pay for all!" but when they reached the gate, and Mrs. Fakey stood with extended hand for the money, the sixpence was not to be found. Our hero at last had the pleasure of paying for all.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A SHOCKING BAD HORSE.



UR toll-free friends having now gained the summit of Little Hay Hill, a goodly landscape appeared before them; in the far distance the town of Herdingford, with its lofty spire, then the tortuous windings of the silvery Dart meandering through the fertile meadows, next the ducal Castle on its stately eminence, and then a wide smiling vale, which at that distance looked extremely easy to cross. On the straight road full in front, a long cavalcade was approaching, foremost of which was old "Halth and Contantment," with the hounds and the numerous attendants in yellow. Then came a dribbling line of scarlets, and blacks, and browns, and greens, the wearers riding in threes and twos and singly.

"Great muster, seemingly," observed Mr. Jobling, eyeing the unwonted numbers.

"Got a great gun at the Castle—Prince of Potatoes, or something of that sort," observed Mr. Ellenger, laughing at his own wit.

"Then we shall have a show day, I fear—bag-fox, or something of that sort, p'r'aps," observed the master of the harriers.

"Not unlikely," replied Mr. Ellenger, "provided anybody will trust the Duke for one, *he—he—he, haw—haw—haw.*"

The Holly Bush was a great resort of drovers and people of that description, but since they took to the rail, the Bush has rather come down in the world, and is more supported by the sale of lemonade and other non-intoxicating beverages, than by that of old Sir John Barleycorn. It stands in the centre of a

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

good country, Sunnyside Woods on the north, Shipton Green Grove on the south, Ravensdowne Craigs on the east, and Fernside Plantations on the west. Go which way a fox will, he can never get wrong. Though not so well adapted for a show meet as a park or a castle, it was better calculated for drawing a field, the roads being sound and good, and Haggish always showing sport when he could.

The fineness of the day, the badness of the previous ones, the fame of the country, and the attraction of a Prince, all conduced to a bumper, and people came whipping on wheels and spurring on steeds from all parts of the country, and great was the surprise and exclamations at unexpected encounters.

"Why, Short! who would have thought of seeing you here!"

"What, Cox! have you come all the way from Eddyford Edge? You are the boy for an early start. Wonder if you breakfasted over night."

"No, but I shaved," replied Cox, feeling his chin as he spoke.

Then when Mr. Haggish and the hounds came up, there were fresh exclamations, varied by inquiries as to who was at the castle, who on the road, and what Haggish would have to drink.

"Thank ye, just nothin' at all, I'm obliged to ye," replied the veteran, touching the peak of his cap to the inquirer, adding, "hanting and drankin are just twa men's work."

"Oh, but a glass 'ill not hurt you," observed Mr. Wallower, the wool-stapler, who dearly loved one himself.

"O faith, but it's just the first glass that does all the mischief; one glass begets another till a thing becomes foo, and no fit to take care of itself—halth and contantment's my motto," added he, turning with his hounds into the little grass field in front of the Inn as he spoke.

"Now lat them have a roll," exclaimed he to the amateur whips who were for driving them up to him like a flock of sheep. And forthwith the hounds began rolling and stretching themselves on the greensward, uttering occasional notes of delight at the prospect of the coming sport.

Fortunately for Billy Brown, the corpulent landlord of the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Holly Bush Inn, all the field were not of Mr. Haggish's way of thinking, and black bottles of whiskey, rum, and gin, began to appear and circulate freely to mutual "good healths" and "good sports." And so a good many shillings and sixpences thus passed into Brown's pocket. Having wetted their whistles, the parties at length began looking at their watches; twenty minutes past time and no Duke.

"His Grace will not be coming," exclaimed Mr. Archy Ellenger. "Hadh't you better throw off, Jock?"

"His Grace *is* coming, and the Earl too," replied Mr. Haggish, wondering what business Mr. Ellenger had to "Jock" him.

"Coming! aye, so is Christmas," sneered Mr. Ellenger, adding, "It's no use people advertising for one hour, and coming at another."

"Not a bit," assented Mr. Bagnal, the butcher, who wanted a little bill of the Duke, and was thinking of dunning him.

At length, as even the most patient of the now numerous field were beginning to grumble, a something was seen in the distance, and presently the red and yellow liveries of the Duke loomed in perspective, and all eyes turned the way they were coming. There were out-riders both before and behind, who came working their arms in the great-exertion-little-progress-way peculiar to the riders of half-tired horses. The postilions, who had been nursing their horses, presently began to spur and exert themselves in order to come up with a dash, which they did to the door of the Holly Bush Inn. Hats and caps then rose from the heads of those arrived, Archy Ellenger's shocking bad hat making as great an effort as any of them. These salutations being condescendingly returned by the noble inmates of the carriage, the powdered footmen let down the steps, and the Prince, the Duke, and the Earl descended, and entered the parlour of the Holly Bush Inn, there to revise their attire. This they were not long in doing, and they presently returned, all red, and gold, and fancy colours, the Duke and his Lordship wearing leathers and tops, the Prince's nether man being encased in a pair of superlatively shining Napoleons.



THE PRINCE DISPLAYS HIS HORSEMANSHIP.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

It was a pity that the great men's horses were not so good as their clothes, or the turn out would have been very respectable. The Duke, to be sure, had a good one for himself, but Lord Marchhare having lamed the bay on which Leech depicted him piloting Miss Rosa, was reduced to a weedy little chestnut of one of the whips, while the Prince was put upon a great ambling, high-crested, hollow-backed white, that looked more like a trumpeter's horse than a hunter. However, its flowing mane and abundant tail pleased the foreigner, who having mounted, began ambling and curvetting and caprioling among the crowd. But he had to earn his keep yet by having such of the field presented to him as the Duke thought would pay for the honour ; and forthwith much of the same sort of scene ensued that was enacted at the *battue*—people being brought up and introduced whom the stranger would forget the next moment. To most of these the affable Prince offered some sage observation, such as "It vos von vare fine day for foxing—should kill many dozens of them he thought," his Highness thinking that in fox-hunting, as in pheasant-shooting, quantity was the criterion of sport. Meanwhile Mr. Haggish sat on his great black horse Galashiels, tapping his boot with his whip, and grinding his teeth in disgust at the sight of the man who had shot one.

At length it came to Jock's turn to be noticed, and addressing his huntsman, the Duke inquired what he was going to draw first.

"Wall, what your Grace pleases," replied Jock, raising his cap, "I was thinking of going to Sunnyside at once."

"Not Newham End?" replied the Duke, who always liked to sport an opinion.

"Newham End's savan miles from here, your Grace," replied Haggish, with a smile. "Nevertheless, if your Grace wishes it, we can go."

"Ah, I forgot," replied the Duke, "I thought we were at the Mulberry Tree at Burtontongue Ferry. We'll go to Sunnyside at once, then."

Jock then got great Galashiels by the head, and calling his hounds together led the way, thus leaving the meet three-

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

quarters of an hour after the appointed time. But time was made for vulgar souls, not for Dukes and Princes. A general move then ensued, glasses were paid for, horses remounted, and the Holly Bush Inn presently resumed its wonted solitude.

The Prince proceeded at a sort of amphitheatrish amble between Mr. Nelson Brown of Barrow Hill, and Mr. Rennison Reveley of Victoria Green, while the Duke pushed about, doing the agreeable in his own peculiar way, mangling people's names, calling Hobson Robson, and Robson Hobson; asking after single men's wives, and the wives of some who were dead.

Meanwhile Mr. Bunting was assiduously waited upon by Mr Ellenger, who kept introducing people to him, though from want of knowing our friend's name it was only a one-sided proceeding. The intervals were filled up with accounts of the country, and the marvellous runs Ellenger had seen, wherein the narrator had always borne a conspicuous, if not a principal, part. During all these varied proceedings, Owen Ashford had kept up a sort of running commentary of his own, in the shape of coughs, wheezes, and grunts, causing parties to look anxiously round, for there is nothing more appalling to a sportsman's ear than a cough. It is so suggestive of "stop and go home."

It is a point with some people, whether to tell a man he has lost a shoe, or let him find it out himself, or leave some one else to tell; the disgust at the information being oftentimes greater than the gratitude at being told, and an over-reach, a stub, and a cough, may be placed under the same category. Indeed a cough is perhaps more exempt than the rest, for the rider has a better right to know all about it than anybody else, and if he does not think it worth noticing, there is no reason why any one else should.

This sort of logic seemed to prevail on the Holly Bush Inn day, for though many sportsmen started and looked round to see whence the short grunty cough proceeded, and Jonathan Jobling observed to Mr. Cordy Brown, the sporting butcher of Mayfield, that somebody's horse would be better in the house, none of them thought of riding up to Mr. Bunting, and asking him if he did not think he had better go home.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

So our hero proceeded in the great cavalcade, occasionally trying what a little counter-irritation in the shape of a touch of the spur would do towards stopping the disagreeable noise. But Owen Ashford would have it out, and went coughing, and wheezing, and grunting, regardless alike of kicking, or jaggng, or nursing.

Presently a divergence to the right through a line of well-hung gates, brought the field full in face of the cover, and a momentary halt on a strip of greensward outside, enabled the last of the late comers to get their horses and those in attendance to draw their girths, and make the final preparations for the chase. Meanwhile a couple of whips had scuttled away to their places, and the white bridle gate being at length opened, at a nod of assent from old Haggish, the glad pack went tearing head over heels into cover. Then the cheer of the veteran sounded o'er the scene, and the cracks of the whips re-echoed among the hills.

Hark ! a hound speaks—a light note, and doubtful, soon silenced by Haggish's rate—"Cradulous ! Cradulous ! what are you after, Cradulous ?" followed by a crack of the whip. And Cradulous slinks away at the sound. Haggish goes on slowly and carefully, giving the hounds plenty of time to sniff and try each likely haunt, Jock being of opinion that foxes sometimes sleep in the daytime as well as man. Now the cover widens, and Jock's cheery note is heard on the high ride. There is rare lying in every part, any yard of which may hold a fox. And the hounds seem to like it too, for they quest and feather three or four on a line—half inclined to speak—hardly daring to do so—"Have at him, Rallywood ! old man ;" holloas Jock to a favourite old finder, adding to himself, with a knowing jerk of the head, "he's been there, for a guinea." And Rallywood thinks so too, for after a flourish round a patch of struggling gorse he gives a low whimper, which Madrigal, dropping her stern, endorses, and away they race up the green pathway beyond. Now the scent fails them, and, after a momentary hesitation, they make an inward turn. Prosperous then takes a fling in advance, and with a deeper note proclaims

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

him on—Rallywood, Rantaway, Venturesome, Pillager, Ranti-pole, score to cry, and the body of the pack strive to the point.

Hark! what a crash! They've found him. "Now," as Beckford says, "where are all your sorrows and your cares, ye gloomy souls! Or where your pains and aches, ye complaining ones! One holloa has dispelled them all—What a crash they make! And echo seemingly takes pleasure to repeat the sound. The astonished traveller forsakes his road, lured by its melody; the listening ploughman now stops his plough; and every distant shepherd neglects his flock, and runs to see him break. What joy! what eagerness in every face!"

Mr. Haggish has got great Galashiels by the head, and goes blob, blob, blobbing up the deep holding ride after his darlings. His eyes sparkle with delight, and he is quite another Mr. Haggish to what he was when eyeing the Prince before the Holly-bush Inn. His Highness too tears along with a loose seat and a loose rein on his great white charger, looking as though he would very soon stop him. Luckily, the old nag can take care of himself, and will shut up as soon as he thinks he has had enough. The Prince, however, expects each moment will be the last, and wonders what they can have done with the guns—why they are not doubling the fox up with one as he did. "They vill not kill many dozen, if they take so much time over von," thought he.

That one, however, is a good one, and runs the cover's utmost limits, anxious to break, but headed back in all his endeavours. Now by the foot people, now by the horse, now by a combination of both. What a host of enemies the poor animal has! He should have a dozen lives instead of one, especially with such a skirting pack as the Duke's to contend with. The chorus increases, and even the terriers are squeaking at him. They'll kill him if he doesn't get away.

"Tallyho!" there he goes across the ride, whisking his well-tagged brush right under the Prince's trooper's nose, who hasn't the sense to draw the horse aside for the hounds to pass. Over they go, tearing and screeching, each hound working as though he would eat the fox himself. A sudden lull ensues!

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

The echoing wood is still—*who-hoop !* cries Lord Marchhare, thinking the performance is over.

“Not a bit of it,” replies Mr. Haggish, spurring and cracking Galashiels through the tangled brake to the spot. The fox has laid down in an open drain, and the hounds have over-run the scent. Now Jock tries to recover him.

“*Yooi wind him !* Rallywood, good dog—*yooi, push him !*” Jock making the cover ring with the crack of his ponderous whip. Still all is silent. Not a note, save those of the chatterers on the ride.

“Very odd,” observes Mr. Cordy Brown, who thought that hunted foxes never laid down.

“Very,” asserts the master of harriers.

“The Duke’s dogs are not worth a button,” mutters Mr. Archy Ellenger.

Tallyho ! There’s a holloa at the low end of the wood, and Jock getting Galashiels by the head, crams away to the place. All right ! He’s gone !

“Hark ! what loud shouts
Re-echo thro’ the grove ! He breaks away !
Shrill horns proclaim his flight. Each straggling hound
Strains o’er the lawn to reach the distant pack ;
’Tis triumph all, and joy.”

Not all joy, perhaps, though we dare say it would have been in Somerville’s times when he wrote the above lines. Already the vision of Thorneyburn Brook and Butterlow fences arise in the minds of those who do not like bathing or bullfinching. Still it is a case of do all you can, and

“dream the rest,”

and each man elbows and legs himself out of cover, resolved to see as much as he can. Prince, Peers, peasants, all mixed up in heterogeneous confusion. The “get away” from a fox cover is the real leveller of rank, far more efficacious than any Reform bill.

We are sorry we cannot accompany the horsemen in their flight over Longhope Hill and down into the Hewish Vale, tell



Mr. Buntling's Shocking Bad Horse!

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

how the war-horse stopped with the Prince at Muddiford Pond, and Lord Marchhare sending his chestnut at some impracticable palings, lighted on his head, and knocked his hat-crown out. How the Duke of Tergiversation thought he had had enough at Snowden Mill, and Archy Ellenger at Harper's Green. How the field gradually tailed off, and Galashiels gradually gave in till Haggish deserted him at farmer Muttons, and finished the run on foot—"who-hooping" the fox at Toddlewood Hill. All this we must leave, to return to our hero Mr. Bunting in Sunnyside Wood.

The rides there, as we said before, were very deep and holding, well calculated to take the fiery edge off even the most sportive tailed horse, let alone one that could hardly go on the road, and Owen Ashford's distress was painfully apparent to every one except his rider. Mr. Bunting thought it must be want of work, which would most likely go off after a gallop. So he just jogged him up and down the rides with the rest of the field, the cry of the hounds animating the horse into extra exertion. But nature will not be said nay to, and ere the grand *Tallyho!* Owen Ashford had done his "*possible*," finished before he had well begun. Nevertheless, Mr. Bunting held him on, hoping he might get the second wind peculiar to well-bred horses. Perhaps he might be better in the open. So he took his turn at the lower of the two gaps in the ragged wood-fence leading out of the cover, and with a desperate effort planted the gallant grey in the middle of it. There he stood coughing, and wheezing, and rocking-horsing, unable to get either backwards or forwards. The horsemen behind him then took the other gap, and in this undignified position our friend was doomed to see the last of the field. Presently Billingford, the woodman, came panting up, and, advising Mr. Bunting to dismount, applied his brawny shoulder to the horse's quarters, and fairly thrust him over into the next field.

"He must be bad, surely!" exclaimed Billingford, as the horse lay heaving and gasping like one of Mr. Rarey's "*Incorrigibles*," after a lesson, a very different looking animal indeed to what he was in Sligo Mews.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"I think he must," replied Mr. Bunting, wondering what Captain Cavendish Chichester would say if he killed him.

"I'd get him up, and get him into the house, if I was you," observed the woodman.

"Well, I think that would be the best thing," replied our hero, "only the question is, how to do it."

"He heaves heavily," observed the man, eyeing Owen Ashford's flank, "wish he mayn't have got the staggers." Most people have some pet disease with which they invest every horse that is ill.

Just then Owen Ashford raised his head, and after staring about him with a fixed unmeaning glare, he got first on his hind-quarters, and then after a rabbit-like sit, with a desperate grunt, raised himself wholly on all fours. There he stood more like the wooden horse in a saddler's shop than anything likely to go.

"He's surely been very sair ridden that hus," observed Billingford, eyeing his distended nostrils suspiciously.

"Not a bit of it," replied Mr. Bunting. "He's hardly been out of a walk."

"Then he mun be very bad somehow," rejoined the man. "I would get him home, gin I ware you."

"I wish I had him home," replied Mr. Bunting, eyeing the horse's rigid frame.

"I'd slack his girths a bit, sir, I'd slack his girths," observed the man, still conning Owen over.

Mr. Bunting did slack his girths, and the horse appeared relieved by the operation, after a good cough, wheeze, grunt, he dropped his head, and began to nibble at the grass by the rail side. That was encouraging, and after getting his bearings from the man and inquiring where he would find a veterinary surgeon, Mr. Bunting gave Billingford a shilling for his trouble; and horse in hand, set out to work his way homewards on foot, to the great disadvantage of his boots.

Poor Owen was very weak and tottering at first, and went coughing, and grunting, and sobbing, as though he would break his heart; but he gradually picked up when he got upon the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

hard road, so much so indeed, that, after rising Little Hay Hill again, Mr. Bunting, tired of walking, and feeling for his "Bartleys," inveigled the horse alongside a field-gate, when drawing his girths, he deposited himself very gently in the saddle, and then proceeded at a foot's pace along the green strip by the side of the road. And with grunts, and groans, and occasional stoppages to stare, poor Owen Ashford at length began to go not so far amiss, though the country-people who saw him all thought the Duke's hounds must have had a "tarrible" run.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE SURPRISE.



Nursing a Sick Horse.

UST as our hero had got his sick horse nursed so far on his way home, as to about the place where Archy El-lenger overtook him in the morning, the animal, pricking his ears, gave a sudden start, and

looking ahead, a flowing grey habit appeared upon the scene, borne by a careering white pony. It was now Mr. Bunting's turn to start, for though an unfriendly hedge immediately concealed it from his view, a certain inward something whispered it was *her*. "Her" certainly he thought, and his heart throbbed at the sight. Another instant and the invidious hedge, descending into a cut and laid one, revealed the accuracy of the conjecture. "Her" it certainly was, in flowing ringlets too, which danced merrily in the sun to the motion of the pony.

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

Mr. Goldspink's opinion had come to her ears, and caused Rosa to resume her *ante*-Roseberry-Rocks-style of dressing her bright silken tresses.

Miss started too, for between ourselves, gentle reader, she thought, at first sight, that the approaching horseman was Lord Marchhare, and the worthlessness of the gipsy's prophecy flashed upon her mind—What, if after all she should be a duchess! The fates seemed propitious to the idea. As she got nearer, however, the delusion was gradually dispelled, for beneath the black cap she now recognised first the dark whiskers, and then the familiar features of our friend.

“Why, Mr. Bunting!” exclaimed she, opening wide her beautiful blue eyes, as she reined in her ambling white palfrey beside him.

“Why, Mr. Bunting, who would have thought of seeing you here!” tendering her pretty little primrose-coloured kid-gloved hand as she spoke—half wondering if the gipsy was going to be right after all.

“Why, Miss Rosa, who would have thought of seeing you!” responded our delighted friend, seizing the proffered hand and pressing it fervently, adding, “This is indeed an unexpected pleasure.”

Up then came Old Gaiters, the groom gardener, on the yawning ewe-necked bay mare, which had been left immeasurably in the lurch by the quick-footed volatile pony. Gaiters and the mare had many a weary trash about the country after Miss Rosa, that neither his age nor the qualities of his steed qualified him for. Having succeeded in stopping the great boring brute a few yards below them, he now sat staring and wondering who the smart gentleman in scarlet could be, and thinking he might do for his lady. Being down wind, Gaiters's position would have been rather inconvenient if the parties had had anything particular to say, but being chiefly confined to questions and answers it did not make much matter.

“And have you had a run?” asked Miss Rosa, as soon as the proper Privett Grove inquiries were over. “Have you had a run?” repeated she, with evident interest.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"Why, yes—no, (hem) yes," replied Mr. Bunting in the hesitating sort-of-way of a man who does not know much about it.

"A good one!" exclaimed she with undiminished zeal.

"Why, yes, no, yes, in fact I hardly can tell you," replied he, "for my horse isn't well, and I was obliged to pull up at the end of (hem) time."

"What! have you had a fall?" now asked Miss Rosa, as she saw Owen Ashford's dirty side.

"My horse has," replied Mr. Bunting dryly, adding, "he's not quite up to the mark you see—got a little cold in coming down—so I thought it best to give in."

Just then Owen Ashford gave a hearty confirmatory "*cough, wheeze, grunt.*"

"Ah, I see he has," rejoined Miss Rosa. "Must have his feet put in warm water and a little gruel, when he goes to bed; but tell me," added she, "who was out?"

"Who was out?" repeated Mr. Bunting, "Who was out? Ah, there you ask me a question I can hardly answer. I was like the new boy in the school you see, where, though they all knew me, I didn't know them."

"Well, was Lord Marchhare there?" asked Miss Rosa, coming at once to the point.

"Lord Marchhare was there," replied Mr. Bunting, "also the Duke, and a Prince somebody."

"Prince Pirouetteza," suggested Miss Rosa.

"I dare say that was the name," said Mr. Bunting carelessly, "a beardy gentleman on a capering white horse, who rode like a trooper."

"And which way did the hounds go?" asked Miss Rosa.

"Oh, over the hills and far away. I haven't the slightest idea where. One hill is much the same as another to a stranger."

"True," assented Miss Rosa, thinking she might as well give up her intended hound hunt, and accompany her faithful beau on his homeward way.

With this resolution, she touched her pony lightly with her pink-tasselled riding whip, and Mr. Bunting giving Owen



Who would have thought of such a thing?

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Ashford a hint with his heel to proceed, the two passed Old Gaiters, who presently getting his horse hauled round the same way, the trio proceeded on their homeward way.

The reality of the scene being now realised, Miss dismissed her Marchhareish ideas, and proceeded to talk to her watering-place acquaintance, Mr. Bunting, asked when he came, where he was going, as though she hadn't the slightest idea what had brought him down into the country. So they proceeded at a pace peculiarly adapted to Owen Ashford's infirmities, along the nice grass-sided road cheered with the rays of a bright winter's sun.

At length a harsh matter-of-fact white guide post stood in the angle of two road ends, one black hand pointing to Burton St. Leger, another to Mayfield, and Owen Ashford giving such a series of grunts as sounded very like coming to a period or full stop, the interesting pair at length parted, Miss again shaking hands with our hero, and assuring him that THEY (not Mamma only) would be happy to see him at Privett Grove, and then cantering away to announce the all-important arrival to her parent. And our delighted friend having followed her as far as he could with his eyes, then proceeded leisurely along the reverse road, inwardly congratulating himself on the result of the day's adventures, and wondering what would be the result of the expedition.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXX.

THE EXQUISITE.



S our now thrice-happy hero descended Holmeside Hill, which commands a full view of Burton St. Leger, and the surrounding country, he saw a well-muffled-up man riding a badly-clipped brown horse with a big knee, who checking his horse as they approached, stopped altogether as they met.

"Mr. Bunting isn't it, sir?" asked the man hesitatingly, touching his hat as he spoke.

"It is," replied our hero, wondering what anybody could want with him.

"I wish to speak a word with you sir, if you please, sir," said the man, sawing away at his hat.

"Well, speak away," replied Mr. Bunting.

"I much fear that horse of yours is broken-winded, sir," observed the man, eyeing our friend intently as he spoke.

"What horse!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, wondering how the man could know anything about Owen Ashford's ailments.

"Well, sir, the horse I've been seeing—the horse at the Cornwallis Inn—the bay horse."

"The bay horse!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting—"the bay horse!" Why you don't mean to say there's anything the matter with the *bay* horse?"

"Indeed, I do, sir," replied the man, solemnly.

"How do you know?" demanded Mr. Bunting anxiously.

"Why, sir, they sent for me to come and see him. I'm Mr. Kerby, the veterinary surgeon, and they sent for me to come

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

and see him—he'd stopped in his gallop at exercise, and they could hardly get him home."

"Stopped in his gallop," muttered Mr. Bunting, "stopped in his gallop—what business had they to gallop him? Dare say, they've done it themselves."

"Oh, no, sir," replied Mr. Kerby, with a semi-smile and shake of his head. "It's an old complaint, sir,—an old complaint."

"Well, but what makes you think he's broken-winded?" demanded our hero.

"I *see* he's broken-winded, sir—there's no mistake about that,—can tell a broken-winded horse in the dark."

"Humph!" mused Mr. Bunting, feeling that as he had never had a broken-winded horse, he was not in a position to contradict the Vet.

There is nothing like experience for making people wise. The man who has had a splented or a spavined horse is always looking out for splents and spavins. A man who has had a glandered one invests every horse with a running at the nose with glanders. So with other complaints.

"I don't think *that* horse is altogether as he should be," now observed Mr. Kerby, after a pause, during which he had a good stare at Owen Ashford.

"What—this!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, slapping the horse's side.

"Indeed, I think not," replied the man, "I don't like the heaving of his flanks."

"Why you don't mean to say he's broken-winded too?" replied Mr. Bunting incredulously.

"I much suspect he is," rejoined the man, who had wormed the history of the exchange of horses out of the groom.

"Nay, then!" ejaculated Mr. Bunting, superciliously.

"Will you allow me to try him, sir?" asked Mr. Kerby.

"With all my heart," replied Mr. Bunting, dropping the reins quite resignedly, thinking he might as well know the worst at once.

Mr. Kerby then alighted, and leaving his own sedate nag to

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

crop the short herbage by the road-side, he approached Owen Ashford, and under the well-known pretence of hitting him in the ribs, elicited the expected grunt.

"*I said so*," observed the man, with a nod of confidence.

"What! do you mean to say he's broken-winded too?" asked Mr. Bunting in disgust.

"Just as bad as the other," replied the man, with a chuck of his chin—"Just as bad as the other."

"The deuce!" growled Mr. Bunting.

"Never saw two broken-winded animals in all my life," observed the Vet, half to himself and half to our hero.

A gleam of light then shone upon our friend's mind, and he began to perceive, what we doubt not the sporting reader has seen all along—namely, what caused the mirth and merriment of the people in the Sligo Mews. The advertisement, like most specious offers, was too good to be true, and our hero had aided the robbery by his own proposal for an exchange of horses. But for this he would most likely only have lost a fifty pound deposit and got a broken-winded animal for the money, whereas, in addition to his losing his horses, he was saddled with two broken-winded ones. This was very soon painfully apparent, for happening to turn that very evening to the too seductive *Times*' Supplement, he found the horse temptation had been changed from the loan of two splendid hunters into an advertisement of a superb lady's horse for sale. Thus it ran:

"A CHRISTMAS PRESENT!

"**HIGHLY BROKEN LADY'S HORSE!** To be disposed of for one-half its real value, or let, subject to approval of purchase, 'JEWEL,' one of the neatest and most highly-broken LADY'S HORSES in the metropolis, with saddle, bridle, and everything complete. This animal is perfection, both in action, temper, docility, and appearance, and has been constantly ridden by a lady up to the present time, whose great anxiety is to get it well placed. Colour silver dun, with flowing mane and tail, Arab-like head, with clean legs and fashionable action. Any length of trial allowed. To save trouble, no dealer need apply. Ask for MATTHEW, Miss Holloway's groom, 51A, Sligo Mews, Rochester Square "

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

And thus the inhabitants of Sligo Mews are kept in a constant state of amusement by watching the flies that flock to each fresh advertisement ; stout gentlemen with corpulent umbrellas hurrying up from the country thinking to do the generous at a cheap rate ; languishing young gentlemen, with hands up to the hilts in their peg-top trouser pockets, wondering if the "Jewel" would do for dear Mary Anne or Eleanor Jane ; verdant gentlemen thinking to get a ride for nothing, and wonderfully disappointed at being asked for a "deposit ;" knowing grooms passing on with a smile as soon as "Matthew" presented himself, and less confident coachmen hesitating whether or not to go in according to master's or mistress's orders. Often and rapidly as 51A is cleared out, Aaron Levy the landlord fills up the vacancy with fresh Crankeys and Matthews's, so brisk is the trade, and so yielding the seams of British greenness and greediness.

One reason why this horse-cheating prospers is that parties are ashamed to admit they have been duped, and part with the poor animals to the first person who makes them an offer, or who perhaps will take them in a gift. This is generally some confederate of the swindlers, who thus get them back to operate with again under other names. Indeed, a suspicious-looking stranger arrived at the Malt Shovel Inn at Burton St. Leger, with a packet of pens and general stationery, and had several dialogues with sore-eyed Sam as they lounged against the railings in front of the Lord Cornwallis Inn, the burthen of which generally was that he wondered such a genilman as Mr. Bunting would ride a broken-winded 'oss, for which he expressed his willingness to give sometimes three, sometimes four, and sometimes even as much as four pound ten. Indeed, at length he got so valiant that he wouldn't mind giving ten pounds for the two, if it would be any accommodation to the "Squire." And there can be no doubt that where the whole thing turns upon looks, a five pound note would be extremely well invested upon a horse that would immediately convert the five pound note into fifty or perhaps a hundred.

No one, taking either Owen Ashford or the Exquisite out of

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

the stable on trial, would hesitate to deposit a fifty pound note or give a cheque on his banker, if he had not the money with him, for that amount, conditional on the safe return of the horse ; indeed, would think he was let rather cheaply off for that amount. Half an hour, however, would undeceive him, but when he came back he might knock and ring a long time at 51A before he got admitted. Meanwhile all Sligo Mews would be alive from one end to the other, and numerous would be the inquiries if he didn't wish he " might get it."

It may appear cruel, but considering the torture these poor animals undergo to furbish them up for their share of the deception, it would be a greater kindness for a dupe to give them to the nearest horse-slaughterer rather than prolong their existence by selling them back to these barbarous ruffians. The dupe would at all events aid in the suppression of the fraud, as far as he was concerned, an object that we hope to promote by thus detailing the adventures of Captain Cavendish Chichester's horses.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXXI.

PRIVETT GROVE.



R. BUNTING did not accommodate the peripatetic stationer with his stud, but got Mr. Kerby, the veterinary surgeon, to patch them up as well as he could for walking purposes. By judicious feeding a broken-winded animal may be made available for slow work and quiet purposes. Having ascertained through the medium of the electric telegraph that there was no such person then known at 51A, Sligo Mews, as Peter Crankey, Captain Cavendish Chichester's groom, or any such horses there as his own Bard or the Kitten, Mr. Bunting became somewhat resigned to his unlucky fate, and treated the ailments of his horses as colds they had caught on the journey down. It would ill become a man of his knowledge and experience to admit he had been victimised in any such ridiculous way. So he determined to accommodate himself to their coughing, and consoled himself with the thought that it would have been worse if they had been glandered. If he could not hunt them, he could at all events ride to the place that he had adopted the pleasures of the chase for the purpose of getting to, so Mr. Kerby, having done all he could in the way of mitigation of their complaint, and prescribed the best course of treatment, Mr. Bunting wrote to London for new saddles and bridles in lieu of the wretched things he had got with the horses, and prepared for carrying out his designs in another quarter. Meanwhile he added to his obligations to Mr. Buckwheat by borrowing a second set of accoutrements of him for his groom's horse.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

We need not say there was great excitement in Privett Grove in consequence of Mr. Bunting's arrival in the country; Mamma and Miss both felt that matters were coming to a crisis, and upon the right application of the little words "Yes" and "No" depended a world of comfort, or the contrary. Whichever way it was, they could not but feel that they might sometimes think they had taken the wrong man. It therefore behoved them to be most wary and circumspect. Mr. Bunting was certainly a most agreeable man, but then they knew little or nothing of him (intrinsically, at least), while, as regarded Jasper, there was no doubt whatever about him, though he certainly was a cool indifferent suitor. Even Miss Rosa's return to ringlets, which was all done to please him, seemed to produce little or no effect upon him. "Ringlets," said he, eyeing the rich glossy curls—"Ringlets, well I think you look better in them!" was all he said.

Now, however, it was clear that Mr. Bunting's presence would quicken him if there was any quicksilver in him: at all events Mrs. Goldspink would see that it was not a case of necessity, and instruct Jasper accordingly. And though it might perhaps be better if Jasper were to declare first, yet there was no reason why Mr. Bunting should not be encouraged and put in the right way. Hitherto Miss Rosa had played her cards with the utmost skill and discretion, holding Bunting on but yet keeping him back, just as a skilful sportsman rides a young horse up to a leap, but won't let him go over till he likes. How much longer that game could be played was now the question for consideration. There could be no doubt that Mr. Bunting was safe, or he would not have come down into the country, and as it was clear Miss Rosa could not take both, there was no reason why she should not take the best. The matter was one of deep and serious consideration, and Mrs. McDermott well knew what a commotion our hero's appearance would make in the country, where courting could not be carried on upon the double entry principle of large towns. Matters, therefore, had now about come to a crisis, and Mr. Bunting, it was clear, must be disposed of one way or other. So thought our friend himself, who, as



MR. BUNTING INQUIRES THE WAY.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

soon as calling time approached on the day after the road interview, with the aid of Bonville perfected an elaborate costume for the occasion. Crop and the coughing horses too turned out not so far amiss, and another friendly sun smiled brightly on the scene.

A swell in London is a swell anywhere, and Mr. Bunting's smart hat, purple and black tie, careful collar, curiously cut coat, ample pantaloons, and highly polished boots, contrasted with the rough, harsh, matter-of-fact overcoats and mud defiers of the people he met on the road. Great was the curiosity he excited as he wandered leisurely along, trying to keep down the coughs by the evenness of the pace.

Mr. Hodge told Mrs. Hodge when he got home that he had met *such* a smart gentleman, with such a smart groom after him; and Mrs. Hodge wondered who it could be—where he came from, and whither he was going. Mr. and Mrs. Woodbine met Bunting as they drove the steady old family horse, who went dwelling along in his trot as though he half thought he was pulling the cart and ought to be walking; and the Woodbines were lost in astonishment at the glossy lavender-coloured kids!—clean on, too. And did you see the groom's buck-skins, boots, and belt round his waist? The latter was considered the greatest curiosity, and old Jack Chaffey, the road man, who worked by the day, ceased revolving the mud, and resting his chin on the top of his scraper, asked every man, woman, and child who came along what it could mean. Dear me, he had never seen such a thing as that before, and he had seen a vast of queer sights, but never such a queer sight as that before. And not being able to get any satisfactory solution of the mystery, he revolved the mud a few more times, and calmly awaited the coming of the next traveller.

Meanwhile Mr. Bunting held leisurely on at his own pace, wholly absorbed on the object of his mission, so much so, indeed, that although he had studied the map pretty accurately so as not to have to ask any questions, he overshot the Crosland turn, and was riding away for Old Bridge End, when he met Margery Meggison, the rag gatherer, who, in

PLAIN OR RINGLET'S ?

reply to his inquiry if he was anywhere near Privett Grove, exclaimed, "Privett Grove! why, you be riding away from it!" Margery then having told him so much, thought to have her innings, and said, "It'll be Mrs. McDermott's you're wanting, I s'pose?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Bunting, boldly.

"*Or Miss, whether, now?*" asked the crone, fixing her little beady black eyes intently upon him.

"Well, either," smiled Mr. Bunting.

"Ah, Miss will do best for you," replied Margery; "Miss will do best for you. Now," continued she, "do you see yon stacks by the barn on the hill?"

"Yes," replied our friend.

"Well, then, a little to the left of them are some trees. That's Privett Grove. Follow this road till you come to the turn, then take the one to the right and it leads past the gate."

"Thanks," said Mr. Bunting, chucking her a shilling.

"Good luck to you!" exclaimed the woman, delighted at his generosity.

Mr. Bunting then raised a short trot to get a little in advance of his informant. He was presently at the turn, presently at the gate, and presently in sight of the beloved spot.

Privett Grove was a pretty place even in winter, perhaps nicer to look at than to live in. It was an up-and-downy, in-and-outy sort of place, with odd doors, odd windows, odds and ends altogether. You went up a step into the dining-room, and down a step into the drawing room; the larder was where the library ought to be, and the scullery had usurped the place of the shoe-house. However, it was no time for criticism, and Mr. Bunting felt as if he could love everything about it—the road, the rails, the roller, the very chimney-pots themselves. It wore a holiday aspect both inside and out; for Old Gaiters, having duly discharged the duties of groom, had undertaken that of gardener, and scratched the road with a rake from the gate up to the door. All the stray leaves that had been

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

careering about for weeks and weeks, were now caught and consigned to the cow-house. The drawing-room was put into a sort of semi-review order, the Kidderminster carpet uncovered, but the flowered chintz allowed to remain on the sofa and chairs. If, however, the sofa was covered, its worsted-worked cushions were exhibited in a way that looked as if they were going to be raffled for. There was that triumph of the art, Melrose by moonlight, all worked by Miss Rosa before she was fourteen; there was Slingsby Priory, and Coppenthorpe Castle, and a Cockatoo of most conspicuous colours. We don't know how many stocking heels might be left undarned in order that she might work them, but that is not to the point. Our old acquaintance John Thomas was prepared to expect company, while Perker, the maid, saw by the way Miss Rosa twisted and turned and examined herself in each glass in succession, that she was bent on display. She had on her new lilac and black droguet, her neat waist set off with a band and a rich cut steel clasp, an embroidered muslin collar and sleeves trimmed with lilac-coloured ribbon. Very neat shoes and stockings completed her costume, in which she smiled complacently on herself in the cheval glass. Still it was not surmised in the kitchen who was the cause of all this commotion, and it was not until Owen Ashford came coughing and grunting up to the house that Perker became alive to the importance of the occasion.

"My gracious!" exclaimed she, clasping her hands, "if here isn't Mr. What's-his-name!" adding, "shall forget my own next." So saying, she slipped noiselessly down the back stairs, ejaculating "Mr. Bunting!" and took up a position at the green baize-covered door connecting the little entrance hall with the back passage and offices.

Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, now went the bell, in reply to Crop's summons, who had dismounted for the purpose. "Clear the way, woman," cried the footman, hurrying up to where Perker was now listening, in her greatly distended petticoats. Having brushed past the impediment he let the door swing to upon her, and advanced becomingly up the entrance.

"Ladies at home?" now asked Mr. Bunting, in a careless



MISS ROSA.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

sort of way, that but ill accorded with his feelings, giving at the same time a smile of recognition to the man.

"Yes, sir," replied the obsequious servant, bowing to the compliment, whereupon Mr. Bunting alighted, feeling pretty well assured that the eyes of England were upon him, and proceeded to follow his pilot into the house—the beloved house that might be his, marble slab, Louis Quatorze clock, stuffed Ptarmigan and all. Passing all these, our hero, following the footman, turned to the right, and a bright red rug proclaimed the door of the room of presentation.

As they say first impressions are everything, it was lucky this was not Mr. Bunting's first appearance, for John Thomas, forgetting to warn him of the downward descent into the drawing-room, just as our friend had put on his most captivating smile, and arranged something pleasant to say to both of the ladies, in he went in the head-foremost sort of style that a clown tumbles on to the stage, completely putting to flight smile, simper, sentiment, all he had got to say.

A trifle of this sort would be nothing to most men, but to a man like our hero, who went so much on appearances, it was sadly vexatious. He knew there was nothing made a man look so ridiculous as a descent of this kind, and there was nothing he dreaded so much as looking ridiculous, especially before *her*. It was therefore some minutes ere he got his nerves composed and his ideas sufficiently restored to their former order, so as to start from the place where he had left mother and daughter, viz., the railway station at Roseberry Rocks. Having done ample justice to the charms of that beautiful place—the Rocks we mean, not the station—Mr. Bunting next drew a few mutual acquaintances casually before them, and despite Mrs. McDermott's efforts (who had a *présentiment* of what was coming) to turn the conversation, at length asked in a careless sort of way, if they had seen anything of their fat friend young Mr. Goldfinch since they left.

"Gold-*spink*," replied Mrs. McDermott, with an emphasis on the "spink." "Goldspink—oh, yes, we see him occasionally," said she ; "he lives near here, you know."

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“ Oh, does he ? ” replied Mr. Bunting, as though he had no idea of anything of the sort.

Mrs. McDermott here gave the bell-handle a turn, which John Thomas answered by bringing a silver tray with seed cake and some capital sherry ; for the late Mr. McDermott was a great connoisseur, and had left her an excellent stock ; which, however, Mr. Bunting declining, the conversation again resumed its former current of inquiry and recital : what they had been doing since they parted ; where they had been, where they were going ; and though Miss told of her hunt with the Duke of Tergiversation’s hounds, she said nothing of Lord Marchhare, or of his lordship’s decoration of her pony’s head with the fox’s brush.

They then talked about hunting generally, Mr. Jessop’s hounds, the Duke of Tergiversation’s hounds, Mr. Jonathan Jobling’s harriers ; and Mr. Bunting expressed his astonishment at meeting Miss Rosa the day before. Shouldn’t have known her if it hadn’t been for her hat, never having seen her on horseback before, or with her hair in ringlets.

Then Mamma took up the running, and asked Mr. Bunting how he liked Rosa in ringlets ; and though our hero was too good a judge to say anything decidedly against them, yet both Mamma and Miss saw that he preferred her hair plain. And the discussion reminded them of the interview in Seaview Place, when our other hero, Jasper, first saw Rosa with her hair plain ; and an inward something whispered to them both, “ What if the whole thing should ultimately turn upon the question of Plain or Ringlets ? ” Less important points have decided these momentous matrimonial matters.

And after a prolonged sit, during the whole of which Mrs. McDermott pertinaciously remained in the room, as the shades of evening began to draw on, Mr. Bunting at length asked leave to ring for his horses ; and Mamma, having paved the way for another visit, an arrangement that Miss certified with a sweet smile and a shake of her ungloved hand, he at length backed himself out of the presence, taking care of the step as he left.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

The last cough of the groom's horse having died out on the cold evening air, Mamma and Miss resolved themselves into a committee to consider the whole matter. The pros and cons we are not at liberty to publish, but the debate lasted long after Mr. Bunting had coughed his way back to his uncomfortable quarters at Burton St. Leger.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXII.

HASSOCKS HEATH HILL.



WHEN Mr. Jovey Jessop heard of Mr. Bunting's misfortune with his horses, he pitied him exceedingly, for thinking of nothing but hunting himself, it never occurred to him that a man could come into the country for anything else. It was such a thing for Mr. Bunting, he said, to lose the best of the season, all through a damp stable, and though rather short of horses himself, Jovey determined to see if he could not give him a mount. So he took the Jug a stroll round the stables after breakfast, and upon hearing the report of Mr. Rowel the groom, how Lapwing was lame, and Lady Jane off her feed, and the Squirrel not fit to go, Mr. Jessop finally fixed that the Bold Pioneer should have the honour of carrying the distinguished stranger. That point settled, Jovey presently put the Jug into the dog-cart and drove him rapidly over to Burton St. Leger. Arrived there he left him to enjoy the society of sore-eyed Sam at the Lord Cornwallis Inn door, and followed his card upstairs into Mr. Bunting's apartment. After a few commonplaces about the weather, the roads, and the state of the country—the hunting, not the political state—Jovey broached the subject of our hero's horses, which he was sorry to hear had caught cold on the road, and concluded by saying that he would be glad if Mr. Bunting would allow him to send one to Hassocks Heath Hill, which, he said, was one of their best meets, and where, he thought, they would find a wild fox, and he concluded the overture by saying that he hoped Mr. Bunting

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

would dine and stay all night at Appleford Hall after hunting. To an out-and-out sportsman, nothing could be handsomer or more inviting, and though a less vigorous programme would have suited our friend quite as well, he could not say "nay" to the offer.

So it was settled that there should be a horse at Hassocks Heath Hill, and our master of hounds declining our hero's offer of refreshment (though the Jug had a glass of whiskey) presently took his departure, and jumping into his dog-cart, drove rapidly away with the Jug, to the surprise of sore-eyed Sam, who had not time to inquire who was to pay for the "glass." Hassocks Heath was a popular meet as well for Mr. Jessop's hounds as the Duke of Tergiversation's men, to whose country it more properly belonged ; but the Duke not caring to go long distances from home, had arranged to let Jovey Jessop draw all his out-lying covers on condition that he came whenever he required him, which enabled His Grace to talk of Mr. Jessop as a sort of appendage to the Castle—sometimes even going the length of saying that Jovey's hounds were His Grace's, only he didn't like to be thought so desperately keen as to keep two packs.

That style of thing, however, only does for the wholly uninitiated, for of all the undesirable false pretences that men can indulge in, there is none so self-punishing as that of pretending to like hunting when they don't. The parties impose upon no one but themselves.

The Prince Pirouetteza, however, was just the sort of person with whom to turn Mr. Jessop to account, and though His Highness had got far more bumping than he liked on the Holly Bush Inn day, and would much have preferred staying at home singing and playing his guitar to the ladies, yet the Duke was peremptory in his commands for him to go and see his "other hounds" at Hassocks Heath. "Must go and see my other hounds at Hassocks Heath." So hunters were ordered, carriage horses were ordered, breakfast was ordered, at twenty minutes past eight to a *minute*, and the Duke having given all these orders and impressed the importance of punctuality on every one,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

went to bed at his wonted hour, and never thought more of the matter. What was the use of giving Jessop the covers if he didn't get something from him in return, thought he. Besides, the great star should never appear upon the stage till the proper time of the evening. Nothing like making people wait for giving them a due sense of one's importance, thought the Duke. Mr. Jessop, on the other hand, was punctuality itself. Ten-thirty, to a minute, was his hour, and as sure as people's watches got to within five minutes of that time, Mr. Jessop's hat would be seen bobbing above the neighbouring hedges, or the dog-cart, with the Jug and himself jolting to cover together, would be heard grinding and scattering the newly-laid stones on the converging road. Mr. Jessop wishing to keep his Jug as much for his own domestic purposes as possible, and not approving either of the glassings of public houses, or the hospitalities of private ones, always made his meets at out-of-the-way places, milestones, finger-posts, stone pits, bridges, &c., places where there was little or no chance of getting drink.

Thus he kept his Jug empty for the evening. Neither did Mr. Jessop encourage the attendance of the fair. Though a highly gallant gentleman when in his black pantaloons, he always declared that he never wished to see ladies out with his hounds. That hunting was dangerous enough for the men, and the ladies looked far better in their drawing-rooms, with nicely done-up fires waiting for the coming home of the gentlemen in the evening, than tearing across country with their hair over their shoulders, and their faces running down with perspiration. And though the cat-faced Miss Sowerbys did sneer and turn up their pug noses at the idea of anybody marrying "a mere fox-hunter," yet as Mr. Jessop was fresh and good-looking, there were plenty of young ladies who would be glad to relieve the old Jug from his arduous office of comptroller of the hospitalities of Appleton Hall.

Now, for our particular fox-hunting meet. Hassocks Heath, unlike some heaths which grow corn, grass, tares, turnips, anything but heather, is still a heath ; wild, spacious, sporting, and wet. On parts of it a man can career as if on a race-course,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

while in others he may blob up to his horse's tail in a bog. It seems to be a sort of sanctuary for game: foxes use its straggling gorses, the black-faced sheep seem almost as wild as the foxes, hares and rabbits scuttle among its browning fern and ripening ling; snipes haunt its rushy rills, partridges bask on its sunny slopes, while the *co-beck*, *co-beck*, *co-beck* of the startled grouse gives a finished wildness to the whole. There is nothing Leadenhallish or £ s. d.-ish about Hassocks Heath. It would not do for Mr. Jessop if there was. The very road is spacious and open at the sides, leaving a traveller the choice of divergence as he prefers hard or soft. The land rises and falls in wavy sinuous hills, whose gentle dips and bends only reveal other hills beyond. Such were the general features of the dun and purple moors of Hassocks Heath—a favourite meet of Mr. Jessop's hounds.

If the man who plants a tree is entitled to be considered a public benefactor, assuredly the man who planted the clump on the rising ground in the middle of Hassocks Heath ought to be red-lettered in the almanac as a patriot, for it serves as a landmark to all the country round, to tinkers, muggers, picnic-ers, fox hunters, shooters, farmers, and wayfarers of all sorts. The Hill at Hassocks Heath is the site of a lamb, a sheep, a cow, and a horse-fair—a sort of central *rendezvous* from all parts; and though certain white-headed frieze-coated farmers can “mind” when the Scotch firs were more numerous, none of them can ever remember the trees being any smaller. There they stand, at wide intervals, on the gravelly hill with plenty of room for their stag-headed tops to spread and afford shelter alike from the scorching sun, and the driving storm. The well trodden dun-coloured grass around shows by the pole and peg-holes, the clippings of tin, the shaving of sticks, and the ashes of fires, the varied purposes to which the place is applied. Now it is going to be used as the opening scene in the great British drama called the fox-hunt—in which every man can take a part without note or invitation. First to arrive on this auspicious day were a group of pedestrians; Jacky Bray, the gigantic quoit-playing blacksmith of Lockerby Ford, who has

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

walked fifteen miles ; Tom Cooper the gentleman, in a cat-skin cap, with blue glass buttons on a faded red-plush vest, who lives nobody exactly knows how, but whose bulging calves show little symptoms of want ; Nat Skittles the pedestrian whistler, who can do anything but work ; Jim Savage the horsebreaker, who is only half broke himself ; Ned Willowford the travelling basket-maker of anywhere, and two or three smock-frocked shepherds and countrymen, who have each forfeited a day's work to be present. Their beaming faces, however, show they expect plenty of fun for their money. If they do but see the Squire's dogs find, they'll be quite content.

"Aye, they are good dogs" they say, and so they out with their pipes, and squat on the gravelly ground to enjoy a smoke, discuss their merits—eulogising such hounds as they have the pleasure of knowing by sight. The next change in the scene is the arrival of the horses, most fine handsome well-conditioned animals who know as well what they are going to do as the grooms who bestride them. Most of these men are got up for the occasion, smart ties, smart coats, smart boots, smart everything—for there are gentlemen who would rather not hunt at all than not turn out in other than what they consider tip-top style. This, of course, varies with the taste of each master, so here we have laced hats, plain hats, cockaded hats, light coats, dark coats, chestnut tops, red tops, pink tops, and nearly black tops. There is as much affectation about tops as there is about pipes, each man thinking to have his pipe or his tops blacker than his neighbours.

The difference between a show and a sporting pack now begins to be apparent, the horses and servants of the men of the Duke's hunt contrasting badly with the neat quiet equipments of those belonging to Mr. Jessop's. The finely-shaped flea-bitten grey horse and the bright bay, in charge of the knowing-looking little fellow in the black frock-coat, striped vest, and Bedford cords, are our master's own, his first and second horses, for he hunts the hounds himself, and always has two out. The diminutive genius in charge of them may be any age, any age at least save young, for he was no boy

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

when Mr. Jessop took him, and he has been with him many years. His name is Mark ; he most likely has another, but it has long been lost from disuse, at least nobody would know him if he was called by it—while as “ Mark ” he is everybody’s acquaintance ; follow “ Mark ” is the order to all the second horsemen. “ Where’s Mark ! ” is the cry when the hounds come to check ; “ Let Mark have a run at it ! ” is the proposal when the leap is larger than people like, and they want it reduced. Nature meant Mark for a horseman, and it was lucky he hit upon hunting, or he might have been silk instead of scarlet, fluttering on a race-course instead of careering across country.

The slouching-looking clown following Mark, in the unbrushed hat, shaggy head, careless tie, and drab coat turned up with grease, riding the iron-marked chestnut with the white face and legs, is the Jug’s lad, Button, whose Christian name being Tom, of course they call him “ Billy ” ; and the led horse—a grand-looking grey—is the Bold Pioneer, one of our master’s own horses, now for Mr. Bunting’s riding. Whatever Mr. Jessop did, he always did well, a mount being a mount with him, and not an animal that could only go a few fields.

Scarcely has Mark brushed away the mud-specks, and rectified the little derangements of the road, greeted his acquaintance, and made a general survey of the scene, ere the hounds heave in sight, lobbing along in long-drawn file on either side of the road, in the careless indifferent sort of way fox-hounds travel to cover. There are only a couple of scarlet coated men with them, Horneyman the first whip, who would be huntsman if his master ever gave him a chance by being away, and “ Michael,” who, like Mark, most likely has some other name, if one did but know it.

Horneyman is a slight, slim, middle-aged man, while Michael is a little, short-legged, roundabout fellow, who sits like a sack, and looks as though he might be rolled about anywhere without hurting. And many rolls, and bumps, and thumps he gets in the course of the season, for he has no notion of turning, and has many a rough line to fight for himself. Lord Marchhare

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

has been known to make a special expedition into the vale for the sole purpose of having a cram across country with Mr. Jessop's men, old Halth and Contantment never indulging his lordship's taste that way.

The gay cavalcade approaches, and now a gentle rate from Horneyman stops old Gidan, who as usual is well in advance of the pack, and all at once the head recedes, the tail advances, and twenty couple of great lashing fox-hounds arrive in a solid mass instead of in the loose straggling lines in which they had been travelling. Gladsome now throws his tongue joyfully as if to announce their arrival, and Chorister takes up the note with redoubled vigour.

"Ge-n-tly, old Noisy," says Horneyman, with a smile and a shake of his head, and Chorister, knowing the reproof is all moonshine, makes another proclamation, louder, if possible, than before.

Horneyman then turning off the road, takes up a position on the deserted Aunt Sally ground, a little on the left of the hill, where on the comfortable flat the hounds have ample space to roll and refresh themselves. The foot people now gather round criticising and identifying their favourites, and making the acquaintance of those they had not seen before. Horneyman then looks at his watch, and giving the exact time,—twenty minutes past ten,—a general drawing out of watches ensues, whose time is as various as their make, the Lockerby blacksmith's hour being noon, Cooper, the gentleman with the calves, eleven, Skittle's ten, Willowford's nine, and Savage's a little after seven. The shepherds and countrymen who go by the sun expressing their opinion that Horneyman's watch will be right, the rest set theirs by it, and fresh reinforcements of horse and foot arriving, a large ring is now formed, hounds, Horneyman, and Michael inside, foot people in front, grooms and second horsemen hovering around.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE UNION HUNT.



THE first person or thing to arrive anywhere is sure to attract more attention and to make a greater impression on the bystanders than any who come after. The first lady at a ball, the first soldier at a review, the first horse on a race-course, the first carriage at a drawing-room, all stamp themselves upon the mind, and become prominent features of the whole. The rustling pink moire antique, with its lace and flowers, as it descends from the carriage, under the guidance of both fair hands, seems richer and finer than any of the silks or satins or moire antiques that follow, so the first soldier who trots into Hyde Park is regarded as a hero, and the first carriage that rolls down St. James's Street is sure to hold a beauty—though she may be all feathers and flowers.

The first real great man to arrive at Hassocks Heath Hill on this occasion was one that ordinary individuals would call the Duke of Tergiversation's stud-groom, but whom the Duke himself dignified by the title of his Master of the Horse. This was Mr. Hawkins—

MR. HAWKINS,

Master of the Horse.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

he put upon his cards, a stout, solemn-looking, grey-whiskered, grey-headed man—we beg pardon, gentleman—in scarlet, leathers, and cap, who the servants called “Sir,” and touched their hats to. If Mr. Hawkins had only had a few decent horses to be master of, he would have filled the office remarkably well, as it was he was very weak in the department over which he professed to preside. That, however, was more the Duke’s fault than his, His Grace having no notion of the division of labour and insisting upon Hawkins’s horses doing everything—hunting, hacking, outriding, leather-plating—anything—even going to the Post if required.

Then, as His Grace was not in great repute as a paymaster, the farmers did not press their produce upon him, and Hawkins was often obliged to put up with only indifferent forage. He now comes to cover at the head of half-a-dozen screws which would be much better condensed into three. There are two for the Duke, two for the Earl, and two for the Prince, our old white friend with the triumphant ends, Timour the Tartar, as he is called, being one of the two for the latter. It is to be hoped that their numbers impose upon somebody, and tend to keep up what the Duke calls his po-o-sition in the county.

The first real accredited sportsman to arrive is our old friend Mr. Archey Ellenger, who has lain all night at farmer Hobday’s, at Dumbleton, and Hobday having had to breakfast early in order to attend Mayfield Market, has caused Archey to turn out earlier than he liked. His old rusty red coat and cords contrast badly with Mr. Hawkins’s smart scarlet and leathers, and Hawkins returns Archey’s familiar “good morning” with a sort of salute that as good as says, “I don’t know whether I’ll touch my cap to you or not.” Horneyman and Michael merely move theirs a little, as though they were not quite comfortable on their heads. Meanwhile the plot thickens and there is presently a great muster of horsemen, gentlemen in black coats, gentlemen in green coats, gentlemen in grey coats, gentlemen in pea-jackets, gentlemen in over-coats, and in every variety of legging. At length the red coats begin to arrive, those on cantering hacks

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

showing their grandeur openly, those on wheels covering themselves up with warm wraps and rugs,—the yellow collars of the Duke's men distinguishing them from the plain reds of Mr. Jessop's hunt. Of the former we have several of our old shooting acquaintance, the Duke having expressed a wish that as many of his friends should attend as possible. Our old friend, Captain Cambo, has invested his fat person in a very tightly-fitting old red dress with the yellow silk lining taken out, very fragile-looking white cords, and Rhinoceros-hide-like Napoleon boots. Then there is Tonguey Thomson, as noisy as ever, in a bran new yellow collared red coat, but a very seedy brown cap, also Mr. Daintry, both Brown and Black White, George Wheeler—the crack man of the Duke's hunt, who can beat everybody—also Captain Ambrose Lightfoot, on leave of absence from Freeland's Lawn, Mr. Woodross, Mr. Young, Colonel Nettlestead, Mr. Leyland Langford, and several others all bent on distinguishing themselves in some way or other.

Punctual to the minute, up drove Mr. Jovey Jessop, with his Jug, the red hot boots of the latter corresponding with his own rubicund face, and after a standing up stare in the vehicle, to see if Mr. Bunting was come, Mr. Jessop chucked off his poncho and stood out the sportsman. Then there was the usual hailing and welcoming, and Where-are-you-from-ing ? and How's old so and so ? and Have you seen Smith ? and Does anybody know anything about Mr. Bunting ? Then somebody had seen a stranger on a bay coming very slowly, and Mr. Jessop wished Mr. Bunting mightn't have mistaken the hour, thinking they met at eleven instead of half-past ten ; and after consuming some ten minutes in unprofitable talk, he at length holloaed out to Mark, " Well, give me my horse ; and you," addressing the Jug's lad, " stay here till Mr. Bunting comes, and then show him the way to the cover."

" Horse !" exclaimed Mr. Archey Ellenger, " horse ! why, don't you know the Duke's coming ?"

" Ah, true, I forgot," replied our now somewhat crest-fallen master, wincing at the persecution he felt he would have to undergo. " Well," said he, flopping his broad chest with his

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

arms, and stamping to get his feet warm, "I suppose we must wait. It will give Mr. Bunting a chance too, so let's have a run up the hill and see if we can see anything of them." So saying our master started up hill like a stag, followed by several dismounted equestrians, who all found running in boots was not quite so easy as running in shoes.

There was no Duke visible, but Mr. Bunting was coughing his way on the Exquisite in a most uncompromising manner.

"By Jove, what a cough that horse has got!" muttered Mr. Jessop, thinking he would not like to ride him. He then ran down the other side of the hill, and greeted our hero with a hearty shake of the hand.

"I'm sorry your horse doesn't mend of his cold," observed Mr. Jessop, thinking, as he now looked at him, that it would be very odd if he did.

"Why, no, he doesn't," replied Mr. Bunting, still unwilling to admit that he had been imposed upon.

"Well, you've got here, at all events," observed our master; adding, "and I've brought you a horse that can go—ride him just as you like, you know. If you want to go first, you'll follow my whip—if you want to go safe, you'll follow my friend, Mr. Boyston, who knows every gate and gap in the country. By the way," continued he, "let me introduce you to my friend Mr. Boyston," leading Mr. Bunting onward to where the Jug still sat slouching and smoking in the dog-cart.

"Boyston!" cried Mr. Jessop, "Boyston! Let me introduce Mr. Bunting. Mr. Bunting, Mr. Boyston; Mr. Boyston, Mr. Bunting." Whereupon Mr. Boyston showed Mr. Bunting his bristly black head, and Mr. Bunting returned the compliment by uncovering his well tended curls. The acquaintance was then perfected. "I've been telling Mr. Bunting," continued Jovey, addressing the Jug, "that you can pilot him safely if he's inclined to put himself under your care."

"No man safer!" exclaimed Archey Ellenger, who always liked to throw in his word—adding aside, "and run him to ground in somebody's kitchen"—the Jug and Archey sometimes clashing in their predatory exploits.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Mr. Jessop now looked at his watch, and finding it was above half an hour after time, a most unusual circumstance with him, exclaimed at the top of his voice, "Does anybody know that the Duke of Tergiversation is coming? I say, you sir!" addressing the pompous-looking yellow-collared stud groom, "Do you know that the Duke of Tergiversation is coming?"

"Yes, sir, His Grace *is* coming," replied Mr. Hawkins, confidently; "also the Earl of Marchhare, and His Royal Highness the Imperial Prince Pirouetteza. These horses are for them," added he, putting his own a little forward, as if to astonish our master with the number and importance of the establishment.

"A bonny lot they are," sneered Mr. Archey Ellenger, sufficiently loud for Mr. Hawkins to hear; an observation that was duly reported to Mr. Cucumber, and entered on the chronicles of the castle. Archey's chance of a dinner there then became extremely small.

Ten minutes more elapsed, and as the most patient of even the Duke's men were beginning to wax weary, and to ask Mr. Jessop how long he would wait, the glad word "coming" was heard, which speeding from mouth to mouth, put a little animation into the party, and caused them to make preparations for a start.

They were, however, somewhat premature in their movements, for the Duke, treating Mr. Jessop's hounds quite as his own, after the usual lofty salutations were over, His Grace called to Mr. Jessop to bring the hounds up to the carriage for the Prince to inspect. And the Duke's covers being good, and of great use to Mr. Jessop, he had no alternative but to submit with as good a grace as he could, and hear the Duke and the Prince pass their opinion upon them. They asked the name of this hound and of that, their dams and their sires, talked of their colour, their size, and their general appearance. "Pretty tails," said the Prince, "tipped with pink." At length the Prince, thinking to say something agreeable to His Grace, observed "Dat dey ver not quite all so moch of von same size as de oders," pointing to Ginger and Viper in confirmation of what

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

he said. Whereupon Mr. Jessop, unable any longer to restrain himself, exclaimed, "Why, dash it, man, those are the terriers!" and immediately recollecting himself, with a slight whistle and a wave of the arm he got the hounds away from the carriage, and making his way to his horse, jerked his head to the Duke's stud-groom as a hint for him to advance with His Grace's. Getting them mounted, however, was easier said than done, for upon the gallant war-horse being again presented to the Prince, His Highness declared emphatically he would not have him—He vod no more Timour de Tartars—dat he had bomped him till he vas sores. And though Mr. Hawkins tried to cajole him that he was only to ride him the first part of the run, the Prince absolutely refused to have anything more to do with de Tartar; exclaiming, "No, no, get me anoder horse! get me anoder horse!" So Hawkins was obliged to substitute Rob Roy, who had rather a critical leg, and required careful riding, which he was not very likely to get at the hands of the Prince.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXIV.

BRUSHWOOD BANK.



T length they all get mounted to their liking, Prince, Earl, Duke and all, and His Grace having followed up his pretended supremacy by telling Mr. Jessop to draw Brushwood Bank first (which Jovey always did) the cavalcade was formed, hounds leading, the field following in long-drawn file, with a strongish inclination of sportsmen towards the Prince. That great man was as affable as usual, asking a variety of sensible questions, and hoping they would exterminate those diabolical foxes, and so give de chickens peace and repose. He seemed to consider it a monstrous grievance that they should be fed upon fowls. Tonguey Thomson supported His Highness' view, and gave a variety of instances of Reynard's extravagant housekeeping, such as killing a whole brood of turkeys at once, and helping himself to the earliest lambs, all of which the Prince thought very improper, but could not for the life of him understand why it was necessary to keep so many dogs to kill him—"Vot for dey didn't get de gon?"

Our hero, Mr. Bunting, now mounted on the light-mouthed springey high-conditioned Pioneer—so different to the weak flobby animal he had come on, was beset by our friend Mr. Archey Ellenger, who was delighted to find Mr. Bunting had come into the country to hunt, and hoped he would give him the pleasure of his company to dinner—Friday, Saturday, Sunday, any day he liked. All were alike to Archey, Mr. Bunting would always find fish, joint, and a pudding at six, and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

a bottle of Cutler and Ferguson's best. And though Mr. Bunting did not think that Mr. Ellenger looked a likely man to have a very capital *ménage*; yet, knowing it was not always safe to judge from appearances, after a good deal of pressing he agreed to accept Archey's hospitality on the Sunday. And, this preliminary arranged, Archey presently scuttled away looking about for somebody to meet him.

Brushwood Bank stands well in the heath, far from human habitation or trespass, the cover being formed in a sort of copse wood oval scoop, stretching half-way up the south side of Thorneyburn Hill, to which our master was now approaching. Whichever way a fox goes, he must be viewed by the whole field, a great recommendation to wavering sportsmen—who like to know what they are riding at. Though Mr. Jessop was constantly drawing it, and almost as constantly killing his fox from it, yet such was its attractions that it was seldom or ever without one. The hounds now approached it in a lively sort of way, as if they knew they would find him. Having been detained long enough at the meet, Mr. Jessop was not going to give His Grace a second chance by halting at the cover side, so trotting up to the accustomed corner, he gave the glad pack their liberty, and in they went with an impetus that made the old bushes crackle and bend.

"What does he mean by throwing off before we came up!" exclaimed the Duke to Mr. Hawkins, who was now riding respectfully a little behind His Grace.

"Don't know, your Grace," replied Mr. Hawkins, touching his cap, adding, "Shall I ride forward and see?" but before His Grace could give his commands, a loud sonorous voice was heard exclaiming, "NOW, GENTLEMEN, FOLLOW ME, AND DON'T MAKE A ROW!"

It was the voice of the Jug, who was comptroller of the field as well as of the household, and in the execution of his duty was now endeavouring to muster the field in one spot, but it being composed of more unruly elements than usual, the Jug had to repeat his exhortation several times, and even to summons some of the delinquents by name ere he could get them

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

to comply with his request. Meanwhile the glad pack has scattered, each taking the line he thinks most likely to lead up his game. Rummager, Speedwell, and Valiant push on to where they found him last time without troubling to try the intermediate places.

One crack of Mr. Jessop's whip stops their career, and startles old Reynard, who is reposing in a most comfortable reedy grass couch, under the stump of an old tree. Rising up and giving himself a shake, he listens attentively to the echoing voice, and satisfying himself that the cheer he now hears is the same sound that indicated mischief before, he steps deliberately out of his lair, and looking a-head seeing the coast is clear, resolves to vacate by the line that served him before. So he deliberately passes down the hill, and getting upon the old wood track, crouches along the overhanging bushes till he comes to the widening exit place, which, being clear, he dashes boldly out with a whisk of his well-tagged brush that as good as says, "Now Jovey, my boy, catch me if you can."

Horneyman, who is perched up aloft in a thicket, has his cap in the air the instant the fox appears, and as the assembled field get a view, such a discordant roar arises as would scare a lion from his prey. The Jug's meeting is forthwith dissolved.

"He's away for Haselwood Banks," cried farmer Jackman, hauling his great hairy-heeled horse round the reverse way to what the fox is going.

"I'll lay a guinea he goes to Castleford Gorse," exclaims Captain Cambo, spurring and hustling his half-fed screw along as though he were the best horse in the field.

Then there is such a looking out for leaders, and such inquiries as to who knows the way over Elvington bog. Meanwhile Mr. Jessop, Horneyman, with George Wheeler at his heels, Lord Marchhare, with Mr. Black White in attendance on him, have slipped quietly away, and as Michael emerges from the cover with the last of the tail hounds, the line of gallop is formed, and a great amount of daring energy is ready for action so long as there is no leaping.

The old steady Jug, thinking more than he talked, recognised

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

the fox by his full brush and light fur, and seeing the wind was in the same art as when he beat them before, tells our hero he will "ride him right," and the Jug being a well-known safe pilot, several others, Archey Ellenger among the number, sought his convoy, and he went bucketing away with a very respectable miscellaneous coloured tail. Though the pace was tremendous, the Jug thought it wouldn't last after they got off the heath, so he went grinning, and hugging, and saving his horse with his great shoulders up to his ears, dreading every minute to be down in a rut or a stone-hole—or up to the tail in a moss-hag.

Meanwhile Mr. Hawkins affects to lead the Duke's division, and the Prince goes tearing along, pulling Rob Roy nearly double, His Highness grinding his teeth, and declaring he "*vos von deuced deal vorse dan de oder.*" Mr. Hawkins, seeing his misery, recommends him to ease the horse's head a little, which the Prince doing, Rob Roy most ungenerously ran away with him, to the great danger as well of the Prince's neck as of the horse's own critical leg. Luckily the ground was not only favourable but upon the rise, and the Prince, after charging a flock of goats gallantly, and astonishing a cabin full of gipsys, at length succeeded in subduing him. The Duke with his tail coming up politely pretended to think the Prince was doing it on purpose.

Horsforth Hill now appears full before the various groups of approaching sportsmen, dividing the heath from the vale, and forming the natural boundary between the Duke of Ter-giversation's country and Jessop's. The hounds were over the hill before the Jug rounded the little green valley, which brought his detachment within sight of it, and the last of the first flight men were striving, and easing, and hugging their horses up it, saving them as much as they could for the evidently coming struggle in the vale below. The Jug follows their example, and on reaching the bottom he rises in his stirrups, and holding on by the chestnut horse's mane, exhibits himself in anything but an elegant attitude. His followers, however, all do the same, so none can laugh at the other;

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

luckily for them, there is no artist out to draw them for *Punch*, or anything else. So they toil, and strive, and spread-eagle themselves, each according to his own peculiar ideas of equestrian easement, just as ladies lean forward in a carriage going uphill, thinking they are doing a great deal towards expediting matters.

The summit gained, the Duke's diminished party, who have risen the hill on the slope at the low end, came tearing along the top, the Prince grinning, and gaping, and steaming, and looking as if he were most thoroughly sick of the whole performance. Nor is the change of scene at all likely to conduce to his happiness, for the hounds are now racing away over the large grass enclosures below the hill, bearing right away for the heart of the vale, Mr. Jessop lying well with them, followed closely by Lord Marchhare, while George Wheeler sticks to Horneyman like a burr, followed by Black White, all of them sitting in that determined sort of way that says, Now we are in for a stinger. The country gets flatter and flatter, and it is only those who are in the same field with the now almost mute running pack that really know where the hounds are. The tail of the first flight are riding at hats and caps and horses' heads, hoping for a speedy change of the scene. The hill as usual affords a favourable place for many to pull up and take a bird's-eye view of as much of the rest of the run as they can, and many indifferently mounted dark coats gladly follow the example set by Captain Cambo's scarlet.

"Vot von vare grand (puff) prospect!" exclaimed the perspiring Prince, pulling up as if lost in admiration of the scene—the rich green water meandering vale, the dark clumps, the spire, the distant hills beyond.

"Oh, come along!" cried the Duke, adding, "we shall have some fun now that we have got into the vale," His Grace eyeing Black White's meritorious exertions to distinguish himself, and thinking B. W. wasn't such a bad fellow after all.

"Oh, tank you, sare Duke, bot I am bomped enof!" gasped the exhausted Prince, holding Rob Roy hard by the head.

"Would your Highness like your other horse?" now asks

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Mr. Hawkins, riding up cap in hand, thinking the Prince would get through the critical leg.

"No, no," retorted the Prince, peevishly, "I have had foxing enof—I have had Timour de Tartaring enof—let me go 'ome to my music."

His Highness being resolute, there was no help for it, and a very little hesitation at the pace these hounds are going putting a very great gulf between them and their pusillanimous followers, the Duke now thinks it is of no use trying to catch them up, and resolves to save further risk, under plea of politeness to the Prince. Meanwhile, the flying pack press on in close array, and gradually appear no bigger than marbles. The fences, too, as surveyed from above, seem so trifling, that the only wonder is people don't all charge them abreast.

The further the horsemen get into the vale, the more formidable the fences become, until large water-cuts accompany them on either side, requiring skill and strength to get over. The slime and water-mark in the ditches show the marks of the recent flood, and prepare the mind for the probable treat of the river. They are now on the banks of the Lune, with its smoothly gliding water running even with its sides. First up is Mr. Jessop, followed closely by Horneyman and Michael, one side of the latter, together with that of his horse, being now encased in a complete plaster of mud, as if Michael had been taking an equestrian cast of himself.

"Been down?" asks Mr. Jessop, as he gets a glimpse of his disfigured servant.

"Yes, sir," said Michael, with a touch of his cap, "Mr. Black White crossed me at my leap, and knocked me right over—got in himself too," added Michael, with a grin.

"Sarve him right!" replied Mr. Jessop, putting his horse at a stiff flight of rails, where he expected to find a gap, but which had been recently made up, and getting well over. Lord Marchhare follows gallantly, but his horse making an awkward rap, a friendly place is quickly found in the hedge, of which the rest avail themselves. Still there is the river to be negotiated, as they say in the city. Of all the impediments to progress, there

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

is none so impervious to friendship. Water is a case in which no man can do anything for another. The only real kindness he can show him is not to break the banks, so as to make matters worse for the last comer than it was for the first. A wall, however high, is generally lowered until a donkey might step over it, while a hedge is often laid as flat as a pancake, but water, unaccommodating water, flows on in a careless sort of way, that as good as says, You may take me or leave, but you'll get me for nothing less than you see me.

Our fox, either emboldened by repeated escapes or finding the river fuller than he liked, had evidently hesitated about crossing, and after running the green pastures for three quarters of a mile, took a bold swing to the right, and, passing up Acorn Hill, made across the large enclosures on the high side of the wood. Here, however, he was headed. Farmer Strongstubble was out coursing, and it was with great difficulty that his yellow dog Duster was restrained from running into him. As it was, Duster drove the fox so completely off his point, that when the hounds came up they overran the scent, and came to a check at the end of five-and-twenty minutes from the finding. Mr. Jessop saw at a glance what had happened, and, reining in his horse, sat transfixed in his saddle, while the hounds spread like a rocket and made their own cast. The check was lucky, for it enabled Mark to drop, as it were, from the clouds with our master's second horse, who, whipping his horn out of its case, was off one and on to the other in the twinkling of an eye.

"*Into the wood by the gate!*" now cries Mr. Strongstubble, waving his arm in that direction; and at a single *whoop* from our master the hounds rush to the spot to where he has now turned his horse's head, and, catching the scent, go in with a cry that makes the cover echo, scaring out hares, pigeons, and pheasants, as though they thought the place was on fire.

"Where have you brought him from?" asks Humbolt the miller, hurrying up to Horneyman, as the latter opens the gate into the wood.

"Brushwood Banks!" cries Horneyman, as he now passes through the gate after his master.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

The fox has passed straight through the wood, and dashes out into the green field below, just as the now red-hot Jug rides his detachment to the point at the low end of the cover. The Jug views him, and stopping his horse, holds up his hand as a signal to those behind to do the same. Out then pour the bristling pack, and Mr. Jessop, being now on a fresh horse, breaks the wood-fence for his followers. Away they all strive up the rich alluvial soil of the valley in much the same form as before. The Jug's party join on, and there are still some twenty horsemen in all. The number, however, is now about to be reduced. Mr. Ravenhill's keeper is out shooting, and meeting the fox full in the face, decides him to cross the river in hopes of better luck on the other side. So he just drops down the sandy willowy bank, and, after a swim, is presently crawling up and shaking himself on the opposite one. The cry of the hounds is too full to admit of much dandyism, and he trots on, lightening himself of the water as he goes. The hounds turn as short as the fox, and there is presently a rare splashing and scrambling and striving in the water. Out they go on the opposite bank, and Freeman and Resolute proclaiming the line with unmistakable emphasis, the rest scored to cry, and went away as hard as before. Then came the perplexity of the field—the splashing of the hounds cooling the courage of many behind. Mr. Jessop cocked up his legs, and went over just where the hounds did, followed by both his whips and Lord Marchhare ; but Mr. Black White (who was now nearly all black with his fall), thought there was a better place higher up, and Colonel Nettlestead said the same. So they trotted on to look for it.

“ Now, Jug ! ” exclaimed Archey Ellenger, as our safe pilot pulled up, and began to ponder on the bank, “ Now, Jug, ain't you fond of water ? ”

“ *Humph,* ” grunted our friend, indignant at being thus called by his nickname in the presence of strangers.

“ Let me be at it, then, ” cried George Wheeler, whom Horneyman had somewhat shaken off, Wheeler blobbing in overhead, and nearly parting company with his horse.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“ Hurrah for the Duke’s best man ! ” cried Archey Ellenger, as the yellow-collared rider and horse at last scrambled out on the opposite side, at a place a good deal lower down than where the others had done.

This exhibition damped the ardour of the rest, and made the Jug think with Black White, and Colonel Nettlestead, that there might be a better place higher up. So he too trotted on to look for it.

Meanwhile the hounds went racing on at a pace that spoke unmistakeably of killing.

“ We’ll do for him to-day, I think ! ” exclaimed Mr. Jessop to Horneyman, as the latter galloped up to open the gate on to Mr. Collins’s example-farm for his master.

“ Third time’s catching time,” replied Horneyman, lifting the latch, and throwing wide the gate for his followers.

“ Mr. Jessop then resumed his place, and went careering away over the swedes, mangolds, and winter tares, well knowing that Collins would not say anything to his doing so when hounds were running best pace.

They were soon off the “ Example farm,” and on to another that was only an example of dirtiness, then down Sherwood Banks with a roar, past Salmon’s bridge, Crookham corner, and out on to Skyehouse flats, with its wide-extended plain, where a view was obtained, and our game fox fairly run into the open, Mr. Jessop finally holding him up over his head to an undiminished pack, but a very reduced field. However, among the number was the Earl of Marchmare, to whom our master politely presented the brush, expressing the great obligations he was under to the Duke of Tergiversation for allowing him to draw his covers. And after a little time spent in decorating his lordship’s horse’s head with the brush, and recruiting the hounds, the well satisfied party separated each on his homeward line to disseminate the news of the great run as he went.

When the Prince got home he told Lady Honoria Hopkins that of all sports he had ever seen, he thought the English “ hont de fox ” was the most ridiculous, and he “ vonder’d ”

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

that the Duke spent such large monies upon it. So His Grace's purpose was satisfied at any rate, by making the Prince believe that Mr. Jovey Jessop's hounds were His Grace's.

And as hunting notoriously brings us acquainted with many parties, we will now introduce a couple whom the Jug victimised on his way home from the hunt.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE JUG AND HIS LUNCHEON, OR MR. AND MRS.
BOWDEROUKINS'S DINNER PARTY.



Mr. Thomas Boyston.

R . A N D
MRS. BOWDEROUKINS were honest, equitable, give-and-take folks, who loved society, which, in their opinion, consisted in eating and drinking periodically with their neigh-

bours. Mirth, wit, humour, entered not into their calculations; three courses and a dessert being all they considered necessary. Hence everything was most studiously arranged in the most apple-pie order, with, at the same time, a sort of *extempore* air—Bowderoukins often demanding in a loud and audible voice from his end of the table, “WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE, MISTRESS BOWDEROUKINS?” as if he hadn’t the slightest idea

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

what it was ; while Mrs. Bowderoukins on her part was equally elegant, never knowing until the dish was uncovered.

"Partridges!" Bowdey would exclaim, as the up-turned legs now appeared on the scene.

"*Pardon!*" Mrs. Bowdey would reply ; "gwouse, my dear."

"*Hem*—gwouse, are they," Bowdey would rejoin, as if he had never heard of them before, though he very likely had the bill receipted, with the discount taken off for them, in his pocket.

Bowdey, as the country people called him, had been in the linen line ; and Mrs. Roukin's father had been in the flannel trade ; but all that was forgotten now, save when they plushed or powdered their footman, set up a dinner bell, or committed any other act of saltation against the peace of their longer retired neighbours' pride and dignity. Then the shop was resuscitated, and the invidious question asked, "*Who are these Bowderoukins's ?*"

Most people are Dutch-auctioned occasionally—put up at their highest, and run down to their lowest point ; so it is of very little use being at the trouble of appraising themselves—the world does it for them, and, generally speaking, not unfairly either. Still, with all the powder and plush, and pulling to pieces, the Bowderoukins's were a nice plummy pair, well matched, and very "comfortable," which latter term may be variously interpreted—some ladies thinking four men-servants to wait upon them, some three, some two, others one, "comfort," or rather the height of happiness.

The Bowderoukins's residence, Rosella Lodge, was a pretty place—pretty even in the eyes of a stranger—beautiful of course in those of an owner. It was in the cottage *ornée* style, with neat lattice windows peeping out of the heather-thatched roof, and a green verandah encircling the whole ; the pillars plentifully entwined with roses and flowering shrubs. It stood at the bottom of a little round Hassock's Heath-like hill, on whose rock-rugged sides Spruce, Scotch firs, and ferns flourished with healthy vigour, as though they wished no better place. Bowdey had planned the house himself, and if it lacked some of the comforts that a scientific architect would have

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

given it, Bowdey had the satisfaction of knowing that he had saved said architect's fees, and was entitled to the credit of all the commendation that was lavished upon it. In truth, Bowdey had rather sacrificed comfort to appearances, for though the receiving rooms, library, drawing, and dining-room *en suite*, were good, the bed-rooms at either end of the house were only so so, and liable to the intrusion of beetles, earwigs, and other undesirable insects.

To be such a fat, comfortable-looking man, Mr. Bowderoukins was a desperate fidget, always looking at his watch, always dreading to be late, always fearing people were not going to arrive. On his grand company days he was more than usually fidgetty, wondering why Paul didn't lay the cloth, wondering why Mrs. Empson the cook didn't put down the meat, fearing lest the fish mightn't come, or the tea-cakes be late. He was always a good hour in advance of the day ; and instead of running after time, was always hurrying other people up to it. If Bowdey had had to cook the dinner and wait as well, he could not have been in a greater stew ; whereas all he had to do was to sit quietly in his easy arm-chair, exclaiming at intervals, " WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE, MISTRESS BOWDEROUKINS ? " and so on to the end of the short dialogue appropriated to the piece.

Country hospitality being regulated a good deal by the moon, it so happened that what in the hunting calendar would be called the " Hassocks Hill day," had been fixed upon by our friends (if they will allow us to call them so) for the usual quarterly display of plate, linen, and china ; and after the usual amount of prevarication, for people can fib in the country almost as well as they can in the towns, a full table full of guests had been engaged to assist at the demolition of a turbot, a Yorkshire pie, a Norfolk turkey hung in Dorking sausages, and other delicacies too numerous to insert in anything but a cookery book, all of which had given our host and hostess an amazing amount of trouble to get and prepare. As the time approached, the excitement became more intense ; so much so, indeed, that, on the day of the great event, Bowderoukins could

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

neither settle to his paper, nor his books, nor yet to that last solace of all—the contemplation of his accounts. He was in and out, backwards and forwards, here, there, and everywhere.

Being a man of pro-o-perty (eighteen acres in a ring-fence), Bowderoukins of course patronised the chase. We don't mean to say that he piled his fat self on a saddle, for, in truth, he was too washbally for riding, but he talked affably about hunting, hoped the redcoats he met had had good sport, said he supposed Mr. Jovey Jessop had a good set of dogs that year, hoped foxes were plentiful, and so on. Now it so happened that, in order to allay the fever of excitement, and perhaps prevent himself committing an assault, he took frequent trots down to the green gate at the end of the little curved drive opening upon the Kelvingdon and Hassocks Heath road, and, as luck would have it on the third excursion, just as he was rubbing his nose on his hand as he leant with his arm on the uppermost rail, who should come riding along but the Jug and our hero Mr. Bunting.

"Holloa! Mr. Boyston!" exclaimed Mr. Bowderoukins to old hot boots, "How are you?" opening the gate and going out to greet him as Boyston came up. Then seeing a stranger, Bowdey gave Bunting a full view of his large bald turnip-shaped head, by raising his green-brimmed drab wide-a-wake hat to him.

"Well, and what sport have you had?" asked he, as soon as Mr. Bunting's cap was restored to his head.

"Oh, very good, at least, very fair, middling—that is to say," muttered Boyston, in the indistinct sort of way of a man who has lost the hounds.

"Killed!" asked Bowderoukins, who considered killing the real criterion of sport. In shooting he knew that hitting was everything.

"Yes, no, yes, can't 'zactly tell," replied Boyston; "the fact is, the hounds (cough), the river (hem), the hills (hum)—you couldn't give us a glass of ale, could you?"

"By all means," replied Mr. Bowderoukins; "glass of sherry, too, if you like, and a biscuit."

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"Oh no," exclaimed the Jug, "just a glass of ale—wouldn't touch a drop of wine in a morning if it was ever so."

"Well, but p'r'aps your friend will," replied the hospitable Mr. Bowderoukins, looking at Mr. Bunting as he now opened the green gate for them to enter.

They then passed through, and, leaving the gate to swing to at its leisure, proceeded up the slightly ascending drive, Mr. Bowderoukins waddling and puffing and blowing in the uncomfortable sort of way of a pursy little gentleman trying to keep up a conversation with people on horseback.

"Gwacious goodness, who's here!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, who was superintending the removal of the drugget from the dining-room carpet, as the last turn of the road brought the guests in full view of the house, and of course the house in full view of the guests. "Goodness gwacious! I do believe it's the Jug—the Jug and a stranger! Whatever *can* Mr. Bowderoukins mean by bringing these people here on such a day as this."

"Oh dear! oh dear! I'd rather see anybody than that great red-faced man." The latter exclamation proceeded from one of the crimson curtains of the ground-reaching windows of the dining-room, where Maria the parlour-maid was busy distributing and pyramiding the napkins to the fourteen chairs for the fourteen guests, who were expected to partake of Rosella Lodge hospitality.

We need not say Mrs. Roukins was desperately alarmed, for, independently of not being in company-trim, having on an old stained blue and soot-coloured silk dress, with a very ordinary collar, she well knew that very little interruption at this time of day would throw the whole establishment out of gearing, and make it as useless as an engine run off a railway. But if she was not in apple-pie order, the drawing-room was—carpet uncovered, mirror unmuslined, and all the infatuated worsted-work that ladies so much prefer to making their own clothes—developed for the occasion. Well she knew what little respect was paid by dirty-booted sportsmen to such decorations. She had absolutely seen old fat farmer Whickenrake souse down on

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

her floss silk pheasants as if they had been a truss of straw. All these considerations flashed across her mind with inconceivable velocity, causing her to bundle Maria out of the room, and rush into the kitchen to consult with the cook.

Bowdey, too, had his misgivings, and now said in a loud and audible voice, as he pulled up and gave the brightly burnished knob of the sash-door bell a pull, "You're *sure* you won't take anything but a glass of ale?"

"Well, no, I think not," drawled the Jug, looking undecidedly at Mr. Bunting; and then adding, "No, nothing, unless it were a pail of gruel for the horses."

"Pail of gruel for the horses," repeated Mr. Bowderoukins; "pail of gruel for the horses, certainly; will you have it here or——?" dreading to name where.

"P'r'aps we may as well put them into the stables for a few minutes," observed Mr. Boyston to Mr. Bunting.

"Well," assented Mr. Bunting, who now looked upon Mr. Boyston as master of the horse.

The "well" palled on Mr. Bowderoukins's ear like a death-knell. He wished he had never gone to the gate.

Mrs. Bowderoukins, too, though out of ear-shot, saw by the movement there was mischief, and dreaded the result. Mrs. Tom Tucker, too, coming to dine—a woman who saw and told everything. "Oh dear! Bowderoukins must be——." So saying, she hurried away to the dairy window which commanded a view of the yard, and there saw the dreadful apparition of the two red-coats alighting from their horses and leading them into the stable. "They shalln't come in the back way, at all events," said she to herself, bolting the door and turning the key in the lock. Archey Ellenger had once slipped in that way and caught her whipping a cream. Nor was Mrs. Bowderoukins premature in her movements, for scarcely had she communicated her worst fears to the cook ere a rattle at the latch, followed by a kick from one of the Jug's great thick-soled boots, announced an attempt to get in by the forbidden way.

"Come round to the front door!" now holloaed

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Bowderoukins from the centre of the yard. "Come round to the front door!" repeated he, extending his right arm in the direction he wanted them to go. The trio then formed and retraced their steps to the front. Dreadful, indeed, was now the agony of Mrs. Bowderoukins. She saw there was going to be a pretty kettle of fish. Bowdey, too, was in such a state of tribulation, that Mr. Bunting's flattering observations on the beauty of his place were wholly lost in considering what he should do with his guests—where he should put them—what he should give them; above all, how he should get rid of them. Meanwhile the old Jug trudged on in his usual stolid way—his whip under his arm, his hands behind his back, and the accumulated mud of the day clustering on his boots. How Bowderoukins shuddered as he looked at them. "Unlucky man, that he was! What the deuce sent him down to the gate! Why didn't he let them pass." The trio were now, however, again at the door, which Paul had left open, as if expecting a return; and our greatly perturbed host made a last desperate effort to get rid of them by saying "Will you have your ale here? get it in a minute! you know,"—looking as if he would run for it himself.

"May as well go in, now that we have got off our horses," replied the Jug, stumping into the passage, and taking off his hat he stuck his whip in his coat-pocket, in a quite-at-home sort of way. Mr. Bunting followed on, and there was then no help for it. A rapid retrospect made Bowderoukins resolve to brave it out in the dining-room, hoping that the sight of coming company might act as a hint to the strangers not to stay. So he threw open the door and in they walked.

"*Humph*, dinner party, have you?" observed the Jug, looking at the long table; "thought I smelt soup—dessay you could let us have a basin—just the thing for this time of day."

"By all means," replied the disconcerted Bowderoukins, adding, "I'll go and see after it myself, in order that you may not be detained." So saying, he hurried out of the room, and nearly upset Mrs. Bowderoukins, who was listening at the key-hole.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“ Oh, Bowderoukins ! Bowderoukins ! ” whispered she, with ill-suppressed anger, as she followed him hastily along the passage, “ how *could* you ever do such a thing—how *are* we to manage matters ? What possible occasion was there for you to bring in these hungry fox-hunters ? fox-hunters ! of all men the most rapacious ! ”

“ My dear, I didn’t bring them in,” whispered Bowdey, turning short upon her ; “ they invited themselves—didn’t you hear them asking for soup ? ”

“ Soup, my dear, they can’t have soup ! There’s only just as much as will serve the party.”

“ The deuce ! ” exclaimed Mr. Bowderoukins, perplexed beyond measure. “ What can they have then ? ”

“ I’m sure I don’t know,” replied Mrs. Bowderoukins. “ There’s stewed pears, or cheese-cakes, or tartlets, or something of that sort.”

“ Oh, stewed pears or tartlets will do nothing for fox-hunters,” snapped Mr. Bowderoukins ; “ must be meat of some sort—do let us get them something and set them away as soon as we can, or they will assuredly drive us into a fix with our dinner.”

“ I feel that they’ll do that as it is,” whined Mrs. Bowderoukins, “ and I’m sure there’s no occasion for any mismanagement with Mrs. Tom Tucker coming. Don’t you remember how she quizzed Mrs. Frogbrook, and talked of Mrs. Dixey and her doings ? ”

The name of Tucker seemed to exasperate Bowderoukins, who, dashing at a fine stilton cheese as it now stood up to its chin in a clean damask napkin, hurried away with it, calling to Paul to put on his coat and follow with a loaf of bread and some beer as quickly as possible.

When Mr. Bowderoukins returned to the dining-room, he found the Jug sitting with his back to the fire, resting his great heavy head on his arm on the top of the chair, which he had turned round for the purpose, with a perfect shower of mud under each distended leg on the smart Turkey carpet.

“ Here ! ” exclaimed Bowderoukins, with ill-counterfeited glee, holding the cheese high above his head, “ I know you

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

fox-hunters don't like to be kept waiting, so I've brought you the first thing I could lay hold of," placing the cheese on the table just opposite the Jug as he spoke.

"*Humph* ! Cheese is it," observed the Jug, carelessly ; " I thought you said soup."

"The soup wouldn't be ready this half-hour," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, "and I thought you would like to be doing."

"Oh, why, we're in no hurry for that matter," drawled the Jug—"don't dine till six thirty ; however, as the cheese has come, we may as well attack it," continued he, advancing his chair a little as he sat, to the great detriment of the joints. He then dived deeply into the cheese, and, having helped himself plentifully, pushed it along to Mr. Bunting. The bread and beer then appeared.

Munch, munch, munch, now went the Jug, in the steady deliberate sort of way in which he did everything. *Munch, munch, munch*, continued he, to the evident horror of his host.

"Have a little ale," suggested Mr. Bowderoukins, slightly elevating his tenpenny—pointing to the foaming tankard as he spoke.

"Presently," replied the Jug, without taking his eyes off the cheese.

"Deuce take the fellow," inwardly growled Mr. Bowderoukins, wishing he had never seen his great red face.

Munch, munch, munch, went the leisurely Jug as before.

"Now I'll have a little," at last said the Jug, looking up and holding his glass out to be filled.

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, pouring him out a bumper, which the Jug disposed of at a draught.

"Not very strong," observed he, setting the glass down.

"Can have some bottled Bass if you prefer it," observed Mr. Bowderoukins, incautiously.

"Bottled Bass, can I ?" repeated the Jug ; adding, after a pause, "Well, I don't care if I have a little bottled Bass."

Mr. Bowderoukins rang the bell vehemently.

"Bottle of ale, Paul !" exclaimed he, as the footman entered.

"Yes, sir," said the man-boy, retiring.



"NOW I'LL HAVE A LITTLE."

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“ *Quick !* ” exclaimed Bowderoukins, adding, “ the gentlemen are in a hurry.”

“ No, we’re not,” replied the Jug, again attacking the cheese.

The Bass was a good deal better than the beer, and the Jug, having swigged off a glass, said he felt all the better for it.

“ Have another ! ” exclaimed his host, holding up the bottle.

“ Presently,” replied the Jug, returning to his cheese.

“ Oh, Bowderoukins, Bowderoukins, what a goothe you are,” lisped his agonised wife, who had now returned to her listening-place at the door. “ However is a dinner to be served under such circumstances ? ”

Meanwhile the phlegmatic Jug jogged on with his cheese with his usual stolid vacancy, Mr. Bunting only eating for conformity. At length the Jug’s appetite was apparently appeased, and having drained the bottle of Bass, he rose from his seat, and taking a coat-lap under each arm, proceeded to warm himself before the fire. Having duly sucked his teeth and made all sorts of incoherent noises with his mouth, he began to take a vacant survey of the room, the ceiling, the pictures, the side-board, &c. As ill-luck would have it, there was a bottle of sherry on the latter, minus a couple of glasses that Mrs. Bowderoukins had just extracted for the mock-turtle soup ; and the Jug, having made a good steady point at it from where he stood, at length said, “ Is that sherry ? ” nodding at the bottle as he spoke.

“ She-she-sherry ! ” ejaculated Mr. Bowderoukins ; “ no, b-b-brandy,” thinking to choke the Jug off.

“ Ah, well, brandy will do as well,” observed the Jug, carelessly taking a wine-glass from beside him and trudging round the long table to where the bottle stood on the sideboard. He then poured himself out a glass, and, after smelling at the contents, drank it off with a gulp. “ Brandy ! ” exclaimed he, smacking his great thick lips ; “ brandy ! sherry, I should say ; not bad either. Have a glass, Bunting ? ” continued he, appealing to our friend as he approached him with the bottle.

“ Oh dear ! oh dear ! this will never do,” mused Mrs. Bowderoukins, who overheard the movement and observation

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

from where she stood. "I must make a desperate effort to get rid of them." So saying, she rose and hurried away to Paul's pantry, who was now putting the last polish on to the plate. "Go into the dining-room—not as if from me, you know," said she, *sotto voce*—"and ask the gentlemen if they would like to have their horses round."

"Yes, mum," replied Paul, taking down the blue red-edged livery-coat from the peg behind the door, and wriggling himself into it as he went. He opened the dining-room door noiselessly, and, gliding in, addressing Mr. Boyston, said, "Please, sir, would you like to have your hosses round, sir?"

"Presently," replied the Jug—"presently," pouring himself out another glass of sherry, and resuming his backward seat on the chair before the fire, with the bottle full before him.

"That's Gordon's Golden, I should say," observed the Jug, smacking his lips, and looking at the now diminished quantity.

"No, Christopher's," replied Mr. Bowderoukins.

"Christopher's, is it?" replied the Jug, taking another glass, as if to satisfy himself on the point. "Christopher's, in Great Coram Street—I know him," continued he, drinking the wine off. "Very good it is," added the Jug, nursing his glass on his knee—with the evident view of replenishing it. "You haven't such a thing as a biscuit in the house, have you?" asked he, addressing Mr. Bowderoukins.

"Biscuit," gasped Bowderoukins—thinking his guests would never go—"biscuit!" repeated he. "Yes, I dare say I have," ringing the bell as he spoke.

Great was Mrs. Bowderoukins's horror when she found the summons was not for the horses. At first she declared there were no biscuits, although she had a whole bag-full in the store-room; then considering the voracious fox-hunters might demand something else, she determined to give them some biscuits, and tell Paul to make another announcement about the horses, so, getting a plate, she put a couple of biscuits upon it, and desired Paul to let the gentlemen know their horses had done their gruel.

"Done, have they?" replied the Jug carelessly, helping

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

himself to a biscuit—"done, have they—well, give them each a feed of corn"—stretching his arm out again for the bottle as he spoke.

The Jug then looked first at one great boot, and then at the other, and finally cocking up his heels, began jingling his spur against the French-polished chair-legs, with his glass on his knee, and a steady eye on the bottle.

Thus he continued for some minutes, Mr. Bunting and his host mutually wishing he would go. Mrs. Bowderoukins, like all people away from the absolute scene of action, was doubly solicitous, imagining all sorts of misfortunes; now that they would upset the bottle all down the fine pheasant-patterned table-cloth, now that they would all get drunk together, now that the Jug would catch the cloth with his spur, and drag the whole contents of the table on to the floor—candelabra, candlesticks, china-vases, wax-flowers, and all. At length she could contain herself no longer, and, summoning Paul again, she desired him to go into the dining-room and tell the gentlemen their horses were quite ready.

"Please, sir, your horses are quite ready," said Paul, addressing the Jug, who had just helped himself to another bumper of wine.

"Oh, Paul! Paul! why persecutest thou me!" exclaimed the Jug peevishly, amidst the mirth of the party at his unwonted explosion.

It was now clearly a case of "finish the bottle;" so Mr. Bowderoukins, changing his tactics, directed his exertions that way. "Help yourself!" exclaimed he gaily, as the Jug sat nursing his glass on his knee; "I'm afraid you don't like the wine."

"Oh, yes I do," replied the Jug; "the wine's good wine."

"It is good wine," assented Mr. Bowderoukins, "the best I can buy."

The Jug then showed his appreciation of it by taking another glass.

The wine presently approached the bottom of the bottle; and Mr. Bowderoukins, determining not to be inveigled into a

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

second bottle, seized an empty glass, and helping himself to a small quantity of wine, held the glass up, saying, "Well, sir, I'll give you our next merry meeting!"

"Our next merry meeting," growled the Jug, in his usual lugubrious accents.

Having quaffed off the glass, he sat a few seconds with it on his knee, as if to be sure there was no more wine coming. Mr. Bunting, who had noticed their host's perturbation, now came to the rescue by saying, he supposed they had better be going.

"Well, I suppose we had," replied the Jug, rising and shaking the further dried mud off his boots as he set down the glass on the table.

"Will you go to the stable or have the horses brought to the door?" now asked Mr. Bowderoukins.

"May as well have them to the door," replied the Jug, who didn't like trouble.

"I'll go and send them round, then," said Mr. Bowderoukins, hurrying out of the room, and communicating the glad intelligence to his half-frantic wife that they were going at last.

"Have a weed?" now asked the Jug, diving into his breast-pocket and producing a greasy old Russia leather cigar-case as he spoke, and offering the choice of a row of cigars to our friend.

"Thanks," replied Mr. Bunting, helping himself to one; adding, "we mustn't smoke here, though, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," rejoined the Jug, taking a cedar match out of the bronze stand on the black marble mantel-piece and applying it to the fire. "These things are meant to light them with," said he; so saying, he used one for the purpose, and putting it to the cigar, presently raised a good cloud of smoke.

"Gwacious goodness, they're smoking, I do believe!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, who had the greatest horror of tobacco, and knew that Mrs. Tom Tucker had too. "Oh, Bowdey, Bowdey, run and hurry them with their horses, or they'll make the whole house reek like a tenth-rate tavern."

Whereupon Bowderoukins crowned himself again with his drab wide-awake, and rushed frantically up to the stable just

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

as the Jug's horse put his head out of the door. "Quick, Paul, quick!" cried he to the footman who had charge of it, "the gentlemen are in a hurry to be off—the gentlemen are in a hurry to be off!"

But when Paul, followed by Dick Harwood, the pottering man of all work, hurried into the ring before the house, they caused no corresponding activity in the parlour within, for the Jug just went on puffing and blowing dense clouds of smoke above and around his great fiery face.

"Horses are come! horses are come!" exclaimed Bowderoukins, opening the dining-room door, as if to promote the egress of his guests.

(Puff) "I see," (puff) said the Jug, staring vacantly at them through the window, and resuming his cigar.

"Can I lend you a Mackintosh, a paletot, or an overcoat of any sort?" now asked Mr. Bowderoukins, still standing at the open door.

"No, (puff) I'll (puff) as I am," replied the Jug, emitting a voluminous cloud over his great red face.

"Well, then, let us be off," said Mr. Bunting, who really began to feel ashamed of his friend.

"Off, (puff) off!" replied the Jug; why, I've been (puffing) for you."

"The deuce you have," said Mr. Bunting; "I wish I'd known that before;" adding, "come, then, let's go."

The Jug then dived into his coat pockets, and fishing up first a pair of old dog-skin gloves, and then a pair of dirty white mits, proceeded to thrust his hands and wrists in them. That feat being accomplished, he then looked leisurely at Mr. Bunting and said, "Now I'm your (puff) man."

"Bye old (puff) boy," said the Jug, now advancing and tendering a fat gloved hand to his host.

"Good bye," exclaimed the emancipated Bowdey, grasping it fervidly.

"I'll (puff) in upon you again the first time I'm (puffing) this way," observed the Jug.

"Do!" exclaimed Mr. Bowderoukins, again shaking him

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

heartily by the hand, thinking the Jug would be very sly if he got in.

Mr. Bunting then tendered his adieus; and proceeding to the door, the Jug got his horse punched as close up to the step as he could, to enable him to mount with as little trouble as possible; and having gained the saddle he drew rein, and feeling him gently with his spur, passed on to let Mr. Bunting mount the same way. That done, the two red-coated gentlemen sauntered away, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins eyeing and objurgating them from the dining-room window.

"Was there ever such a man as that Mr. Boyston!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, from behind the window curtain; "was there ever such a man as that Mr. Boyston! He's made the place smell like a pot-house. Wonder you let them in, Mister Bowderoukins," added she, shaking with vexation.

"Couldn't keep them out, my dear, couldn't keep them out," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, soothingly; "fox-hunters, you know, will be in. It's the red coat that does it—it's the red coat that does it."

"Oh fiddle! I've no notion of anything of the sort. I don't see why they should have the run of one's house any more than soldiers or sailors or other way-faring people."

The rising dialogue was here interrupted by a horse's nose, with a silver crest (a star fish) flopping over its forehead, suddenly rounding the laurel clump of the drive, causing the now terrified Mr. Bowderoukins to ejaculate,

"WHAT HAVE WE GOT HERE, MISTRESS BOWDEROUKINS?"

"Oh, gwacious goodness! it's Mrs. Mitchison. That unhappy woman's clock is always half an hour fast." So saying, she rushed out of the room, and hurried upstairs to arrange her *toilette*, amid the clamorous peal of the door-bell—strange servants always making a point of pulling as hard as they can. And ere Mrs. Bowderoukins got her best bib and tucker on, another and another peal sounded furiously through the house, another and another letting down of steps was heard, another and another slamming to of doors and grinding away to the back premises.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins were both *in extremis*. Bowdey couldn't find his best blue Saxony coat, or Mrs. Roukins her cameo bracelet or cashmere shawl. At length, after almost superhuman exertions, they accomplished their respective programmes, and came smiling into the drawing-room, full of apologies to the now grinning but lately groaning guests for not being ready to receive them. "The fact was, some fox-hunting friends had dropped in and ra-a-ther detained them. But they hoped," &c. And then the conversation took a fox-hunting turn.

"Did Mr. Bowderoukins hunt?"

"No, Mr. Bowderoukins didn't hunt—had given it up—used to be very fond of it;" most people thinking it necessary to pay hunting the compliment of pretending they liked it once.

Then the door-bell rang again furiously—more company coming—the dread Mrs. Tucker this time, followed quickly by the Bondells and the Holleydales, and, lastly, the Freemans, who brought young Mr. Shuttleworth, who was suitoring Miss Harriet, instead of papa, who had got a twinge of the gout. And when the conversation, which became rather languid, had got cherished up into a pretty good cry, dinner was announced; and after a little backing and bowing, and "you before-me-ing," the guests, Mr. Shuttleworth and Miss Harriet included, all got arranged in pretty good order in the tobacco-smelling dining-room, the scent of which, however, was forgotten on the second explosion of the popular sparkling beverage.

So the lunch and the dinner did not clash after all, an announcement that we are sure will give great satisfaction to our housekeeping readers, and encourage them to be generous to the old fox-hunting Jugs, whose name in some countries is LEGION!

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

CHAPTER LXXVI.

APPLETON HALL.



R. JOVEY JESSOP was right when he said the Jug knew every gate and gap in the country, for no sooner had Mr. Bunting and he got clear of Mr. Bowderoukins's premises than the Jug stopped short at the corner of a grass-field, and, fishing a furze-bush out of the hedge with the handle of his hunting whip, put his horse at the now open place, saying to Mr. Bunting as he rose it, "May as well go over here."

Mr. Bunting then followed his leader's example, and the two were presently sailing over the sound sward of an old pasture, the horses cantering gaily together over the high ridge and furrow. Though there was no apparent way out, the Jug sat leisurely on his horse as if in the full confidence of a comfortable exit, and, making for the cattle shed at the end, he passed at the back of it, and pulling out a rail that had been interlaced with the quickset fence, hopped over the lower one and was again upon grass.

"Needn't mind putting it in again," observed he, looking back at Mr. Bunting, "there are no stock in either field;" so saying, the Jug again slouched in his saddle, and went cantering away to a good blue gate opening upon the Farmanby and Oxmanfield road. That gained, he kept its course for some three hundred yards, when again stopping short the Jug brushed through a weak place in the adjoining hedge and was again on turf. He was now upon Mr. Hollamby's farm, with its trim hedges, piped ditches, and self-shutting gates, which

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

being sped over, a short divergence over all that now remains of the once wide-stretching Scrubbington Common brought them to the locked iron gates of Flowerdale Lodge.

"Must be through here," observed the Jug to his companion, "cuts off three-quarters of a mile. Holloa, gate! gate!" roared he, rising in his stirrups and pretending to be in a desperate hurry. "Look sharp, woman! look sharp!" now cried he, as old Peggy Porringer the custodian came toddling along to take a survey through the bars of the barrier. "Look sharp, woman! look sharp," repeated he, "the hounds are running! and we shall be left immeasurably in the lurch!"

Seeing red coats, Peggy unlocked and opened the gates, and the Jug, followed by Mr. Bunting, spurring his horse, passed through, and the two went cantering up the avenue as far as the Lodge commanded a view of the line.

"May take it easy now," observed the Jug, pulling up; adding, "there are no locked gates at the other end, and if they won't let us keep the road, I know a way through the fields." So saying, he relaxed into a gentle trot, and passing unchallenged at the back of the gardens, passed the keeper's lodge, and out at the saw-mill on the Sunburry road. This line they kept for some distance, till at length a once white wicket, between rather ornamental stone posts at the low end of a belt of beech, announced a change of scene; and the Jug, pushing the unlatched gate open with his toe, turned his willing horse to it, who entered of its own accord.

"What place is this?" now asked our hero, fearing they were going to commit another trespass.

"All right," replied the Jug, "all right;" adding, "this is Appleton."

"Appleton, is it," rejoined Mr. Bunting, as a glorious sunset illuminated the many windows of a large stone mansion. "Appleton, is it; it's a very fine place. Tell me," added he, "is Mr. Jessop married?"

"Married, no! hadn't need," replied the Jug, laughing.

Mr. Bunting looked confused.

"Not that I mean to say anything disrespectful of matri-

PLAIN OR RINGLET'S ?

mony," observed the Jug, apologetically; "only I mean to say that Appleton wouldn't quite suit a lady."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Bunting, adding, "Why not? It's large enough at all events, and nobody ever saw a house that was too large for a lady."

"Large enough," said the Jug, looking at it; "large enough, only there's no furniture in it."

"Oh, indeed," smiled Mr. Bunting, adding, "that's rather against it; but how do Mr. Jessop and you manage then?"

"O we just knock on the best way we can. Jessop don't care for finery; no more do I; so we get on well enough—the stables are good, and so is the eating and drinking; and between ourselves, I'm not sure but that dinners are quite as comfortable without the ladies, for you see they have all dined beforehand, and only come to show their clothes and talk and interrupt one in one's eating."

"Well, but they help to pass the evening pleasantly at all events," observed Mr. Bunting.

"Oh, have them in the evening if you like," rejoined the Jug; "have them in the evening if you like—they are all very well in the evening; then they can spread their sails and show off, but when they are jammed and crammed under a dinner-table there is nothing for them but to poke one with questions and put one out of one's stride with one's soup, or one's fish, or one's something."

A nearer approach of our horsemen to the mansion now began to show the imperfections of the place. There was a sad want of maintenance about it—patched roofs, inefficient spouts, broken rails, restive gates, and blotchy, blistery doors.

Some houses in the country let as soon as they become vacant, others will not let at all. Of this latter description was Appleton Hall—it infested the country papers till everybody was tired of seeing it. Appleton Hall with its spacious park and beautiful pleasure grounds—Appleton Hall with its pineries and vineries—Appleton Hall with its sporting attractions. It had tried its luck as a ladies' school, also as a nunnery, and a cold-water-cure establishment, and had signally failed in all—

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

each succeeding occupant leaving the house worse than he found it, the cold-water-cure gentleman being generally supposed to have stolen the lead off the roof.

When a house gets to this deplorable state there is nothing for it but either to let it tumble down or to let it off in tenements; and there not being sufficient population about Appleton for the latter purpose, the owner was extremely glad to close with Mr. Jovey Jessop's offer of doing the necessary repairs on condition of sitting rent free. So Mr. Jessop did up the stables, converted the coach-house into a kennel, the vinery into a shoe-house, the pinery into a saddle-room, restored the lost lead to the roof of the Hall, and made the premises water-tight generally. As, however, the owner expected to return to it every year himself, as indeed he had been expecting for the last twenty years, of course Mr. Jessop did not do more to it than was absolutely necessary, either inside or out.

And now let us suppose our friends to have disposed of their horses at the stable, and let us get them out of the cold night-air into the more comfortable atmosphere of the mansion. The Jug being a short-cut man generally now piloted our friend the back way instead of leading him round to the Corinthian column-porticoed door, and across the lofty black and white marble-flagged entrance hall of the house. "I'll show you the way," said he, stumping along, occasionally meeting a man or a maid, who halted and stood respectfully aside to let the great guns pass. Traversing a cocoa-nut-matted passage, a genial glow of warmth from an open door shone upon them, and the Jug, now stopping, bowed Mr. Bunting into his bed-room. It was not a sumptuously furnished apartment—indeed it contained little beyond the absolute requirements of life, save an oil-painting of Boyston Hall, with the meet of Lord Spankerley's hounds on the lawn, above the mantel-piece, which the Jug used to sit and contemplate as he smoked his cigar, wondering if he would ever return to live at it again. His bed was a common stump one, very near the ground (for he was in the habit of tumbling out), two buff and green painted rush-bottomed chairs, a cream-coloured chest of drawers picked out with black, on the top of

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

which stood the Jug's Sunday hat, his other pair of hot-tops, also the redoubtable jacks, that looked as if they might be applied to any purpose. On a common deal clothes-horse near the now blazing wood and coal fire were clean flannels and linen, and somewhat soiled nankin pantaloons, with very roomy dress-shoes and a pair of much-faded worsted-worked slippers in front. Here, too, was the remnant of a hearth-rug, with many holes in the middle, but whose texture was softer to the feet than the cocoa-nut-matting, with which the rest of the room was supplied. Before the unpainted washhand-stand, with its solitary white jug and basin, was the hide of our friend's once famous bay horse Dreadnought; but beyond the jug and basin and a water-bottle there was no bath or other symptom of enlarged lavement, the Jug, in truth, not being a great advocate for water.

"We don't sacrifice much to the Graces here," observed the Jug, as Mr. Bunting now approached his unshrouded toilette-table, with its shilling comb, its black bristly eighteen-penny brush, and its sixpenny pot of hard-featured pomatum, to have a look at himself in the glass. "We don't sacrifice much to the Graces," said he, "for we don't see the use of men dressing up smart to captivate each other; and though this is what they call a furnished house, there is in reality very little furniture in it. I was obliged to buy my own boot-jack," continued he, taking up a rather smart folding mahogany one; adding, "by the way, if your boots don't come off easily, I'll be happy to lend you it, for Jessop can kick his off flying, and says everybody should be able to do the same, so there isn't another in the house. It's rather a neat article," continued he, folding it up and showing it to Mr. Bunting—"French polished, brass hinges, steel screws—cost two shillings. Don't know a greater nuisance than pulling off one's boots with one's toes and kicking one's nails with one's heels. But come," continued he, laying the boot-jack on the dressing-table, "won't you be seated?" pointing to his American rocking-chair, in which he dozed away life in anticipations of the future.

"Thank you," replied Mr. Bunting, now returning and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

seating himself on the high green fender before the fire. "You keep good fires here," observed he, as the warmth shot through him summarily.

"Capital," said the Jug, "good fires and good fare is the order of the house. By the way, would you like to take anything before dinner?"

"Thank you, no," replied Mr. Bunting, adding, "Mr. Bowdey what's-his-name has prevented that. What time do we dine?"

"Six thirty," replied the Jug, "six thirty, from the tenth of November to the tenth of February—seven at all other times of the year;" saying which our friend took a little hand-bell off the mantel-piece, and, going to the door, rang a prolonged peal in the passage. "No bells in this house," observed the Jug, returning and replacing it on its stand. "No bells at least that will ring, though there are plenty of wires and places where bells ought to be."

The summons was speedily answered by a neat but plainly dressed footman, in drab and red, by whom Mr. Boyston sent word to Ambrose the butler that there would be eight to dinner instead of six. Having thus discharged his commission, he used his French-polished boot-jack, and drawing off his boots put his feet into his slippers, and, exchanging his red coat for an old grey duffle dressing-gown, prepared his mouth for a smoke.

Mr. Bunting subsided into the American rocking-chair; the Jug put his two rush-bottomed chairs together, sitting upon one, and laying his legs on the other, and proceeded to breathe a strong trail of Havannah cigar-smoke round his face. His black eyes were steadily fixed on the picture of Boyston Park, but he was not in reality indulging in any reverie or speculation either as to the past or the future of it; for he was thinking over that day's run, and wondering if he had taken the water whether he would have got to the end of it. "Wished he had taken the (puff) water. If he had only taken the water, might have got Archey Ellenger a (curl) ducking, and altogether he was vexed he had not taken the water." Then he wondered which way they had gone. "Shouldn't be surprised if the fox

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

had taken his old (puff) line, than which nothing could be (cloud) finer or better calculated to give a (curl) stranger a favourable impression of the (puff) country." And again he upbraided himself for not taking the (puff) water, and resolved on all future occasions to shut his (puff) eyes and just do as others did. "A ducking was nothing (puff) when a man had plenty of dry clothes (puff). Wouldn't do to sit in a (puff) railway carriage (cloud) in wet things ; but on (puff) horseback it was (puff, cloud) nothing. Dashed if he wouldn't always take (puff) water in future."

Just as our friend had come to this resolution, a voice was heard in the passage exclaiming—

"Has anybody seen anything of Mr. Bunting? Has anybody seen anything of Mr. Bunting?"

"Mr. Bunting is in Mr. Boyston's room, sir," replied a servant ; and scarcely had the Jug confirmed the answer with a view-holloa, ere a clank, clank, of spurs sounded along the passage, and the standing-a-jar door flying open revealed the person of Mr. Jovey Jessop in the full mud and enthusiasm of a victorious fox-hunter. He was well splashed from head to foot. Advancing, he greeted Mr. Bunting with a cordial shake of the hand, welcoming him to Appleton Hall, apologising for not being there to receive him, and hoping his horse had carried him well, which Mr. Bunting assured him he had.

"Well, you've killed him I see," said the Jug, eyeing Mr. Jessop's pawed and blood-stained leathers.

"Killed him ! aye to be sure !" replied Jovey, joyously, "killed him after as good a run as ever was seen ;" adding, as he laid his hand on the Jug's broad back, "but what got you, my good friend ?"

"What got me ?" replied the Jug, thinking what he should say. "What got (puff) me? Why, you see I got bothered with the (curl) water—water's a bothering thing," added he, "if you don't take it at (curl) once there's an end of the (cloud) matter ; for the more you look, the less you like it, and one (puff) person said one (cloud) thing and another another, till at last we lost the (curl) chance."

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Mr. Jovey Jessop then briefly related the residue of the run ; but, not wishing to crow, he presently turned the conversation by asking Mr. Bunting if he would like to take anything before dinner. Mr. Bowderoukins, however, having effectually prevented any want of that sort, our master presently retired to pass through his cold-water bath into his other clothes, leaving his guest to the intermediate care of his Jug. Mr. Boyston then resumed his former position, and sat in a meditative mood, with his eyes fixed on the Boyston picture, smoking and making a mental panorama of the concluding portion of the run, which he thought must have been very fine. At length his red-ended cigar approached so near the tip of his own red nose as to be no longer agreeable, whereupon he threw the remains into the fire, and, rising from his uneasy couch, took up the fine folding French-polished mahogany boot-jack, and offered to show Mr. Bunting the way to his bedroom. They then passed out of the Jug's apartment into the passage, and, our friend adhering to his short cuts, led him up the back stairs as if he were taking him to some second-rate bachelor bed-room instead of the state apartment of the house. The opening of a once red, but now nearly drab, baize-covered door at the first landing rectified matters, and introduced the stranger to the wider space and loftier proportions of an elegant staircase, whose perfections and imperfections were alike displayed by a profusion of well-directed light. On the once peach but now dirty drab-coloured walls might be traced the inscriptions and poetical effusions as well of the school girls as of the nuns and the patients of the cold-water-cure doctor who stole the lead, while sundry heads and hieroglyphics exhibited a bountiful ignorance of the art of drawing. Cocoa-nut-matting was still the order of the day—cocoa-nut-matting up the stairs, cocoa-nut-matting along the corridor, cocoa-nut-mats before the doors. A hurrying-out housemaid bearing the last putting-to-rights emblems in her arms denoted the door, and Mr. Boyston ushered Mr. Bunting into a noble room, whose blazing fire illumined the amber-coloured hangings of a prodigious four-post bed, which stood like a tabernacle in the centre. Both the bed-hangings and



Appleton & Co.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

the window-curtains were festooned and draped in a way that looked as if there had been a trial of skill on the part of the upholsterers as to how much stuff they could put into each ; a prodigality that was painfully at variance with the meagreness of the rest of the furniture. The flower-garlanded Brussels carpet was brushed into a mere shadow of its former self ; there was no sofa ; the chairs were few and far between, while an immense high-backed one stood like a throne by the fire, with a large foot-stool in front. The chamber-ware did not match, being of three sorts : white, blue, and green ; but there was a good fire, an ample supply of nice linen, and a spacious hip-bath at hand.

“ Plenty of bed,” said the Jug, contrasting its great carved posts and lofty canopy with his own little stump one down below. “ Hope you won’t tumble out of it,” continued he, thinking of his own exploits in that line.

“ Hope not, indeed,” replied Mr. Bunting, measuring its height from the floor with his eye, and thinking it would require a good spring to get into it.

“ Well, now,” said the Jug, taking his boot-jack from under his arm and unfolding it, “ will you take your boots off now, or shall I leave this with you ? ”

“ Oh, why, p'r'aps you may as well leave it with me,” replied Mr. Bunting, carelessly.

“ Well, then,” rejoined the Jug, placing it on the floor, “ will you have the kindness to put it into the toilette-table drawer when you are done with it, lest any of the careless maids carry it off ? ”

“ Certainly,” said Mr. Bunting, “ certainly.”

“ So be it then,” rejoined the Jug, wishing he might not be doing a rash act ; adding, as he moved slowly away, “ when you are dressed you will find your way down by the lights—no ladies’ rooms here to get into by mistake.”

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXVII.

APPLETON HALL HOSPITALITY.



S parties in the country are only of rare occurrence, there was generally a dinner-party at Appleton Hall every hunting-day, to which sportsmen were asked, or invited themselves by sending or leaving their names with Ambrose the butler, on or before the morning of the day. The table was usually laid for six, which was easily extended to eight or ten, if the harvest of the hunting-field yielded a greater crop of guests.

Mr. Jessop being an even-going man, with the word "comfort" for his motto, there was never any fuss or hurry of inconvenience, Jovey and his Jug always having a good dinner, even if they sat down to it alone. Monsieur Ragout, the cook, of course liked to know when there was a new-comer, so that he might put on the extra steam of astonishment, otherwise the culinary current ran pretty evenly.

When our re-arranged hero descended the grand staircase, he found Ambrose and a drab and red liveried footman waiting to receive the candles of the inmates, and to meet and announce the out-of-door guests on their arrival. Receiving Mr. Bunting's candle with a bow, and handing it to the footman to set down, Ambrose conducted our friend across the spacious entrance hall towards a lofty, richly-carved, but very dirty door on the right. This being well thrown open, Mr. Bunting entered a large well-proportioned drawing-room, whose once costly gilding and decorations were almost made respectable by the force of the fire, and the light that was now thrown upon them. It was,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

however, but a momentary triumph, for a second glance showed the indignities to which the room had been subjected, as well by the girls as the nuns and the cold-water-cure gentleman. The hundred guinea mirror was starred in three places, the white marble chimney-piece was chipped and scratched, the crest in the middle was wholly gone, while the coloured coat-of-arms was nearly obliterated.

Whatever extravagance there might have been in the furniture in former days, there was nothing of that sort now, for Mr. Jessop had discarded all the faded finery, substituting good cocoa-nut-matting for the fine Kidderminster carpet, whose holes were always tripping people up, *chasséed* the footstools and ottoman, and sent all the invalided furniture up stairs into the garret. It now looked more like a ball-room with a little hired rout furniture than anything else.

Some people look better in hunting things, others worse ; Mr. Jessop, for instance, looked better, the Jug worse. Mr. Bunting scarcely knew the former, as he now stood in the usual British ease-before-elegance style warming himself at the blazing fire. Neither would Mr. Bunting have recognised the Jug in his clerical costumed upper half, but for the notorious nankins below. Mr. Jessop, we may state, did not affect a dress-uniform, not wishing to promote the growth of cock-tails in the country. His theory was, that no man should be allowed to ride in scarlet who had not first ridden three seasons in black, an arrangement that he thought would be greatly productive of sport, for very few men, he observed, entered a fourth season—so that all their mischief was confined to the three years, which in all probability they would not take if they were not allowed to ride in red. So he always set the example of dressing quite plainly, not even wearing a hunt-button of an evening, and now, if he had been felt, he would have been found to be enveloped in black tweed, all except a cloth coat and black silk cravat.

Making way for Mr. Bunting at the fire, as he advanced up the room, Mr. Jessop hoped he had found all he wanted in his bed-room, adding that as it was not a very sumptuously furnished

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

house, he begged he would ring, or rather call for whatever was deficient ; whereupon Mr. Bunting assured him there was every requirement, since his good friend Mr. Boyston had been good enough to lend him his boot-jack, which, he informed the owner, he had put safely into the drawer as requested : whereupon Mr. Jessop laughed, and said Boyston was very particular about his boot-jack, and had once nearly lost it by lending it to a friend. He then turned the conversation upon the more agreeable topic of dinner, asking Mr. Bunting if he was ready for his, whereupon Mr. Jessop made the grand announcement that it was the rule of the house never to wait for anyone, adding that it was wonderful what an effect it had in procuring punctuality.

The Jug then hauled a great turnip of a watch out of his nankin-trousered fob by the big sealed jack-chain to which it was attached, and first putting it to his ear, to be sure it was going, which was not always the case, the Jug sometimes forgetting to wind it up, he said it only wanted seven minutes to dinner.

"They'll all come in a rush," observed Mr. Jessop. "Wheeler brings Lightfoot, and Langford brings Daintry." When Mr. Bunting, now thinking it was as cheap sitting as standing, advanced towards a scanty line of bird's-eye maple chairs ranged against the wall, from which he drew one, to bring to the fire.

"Stop half a minute !" cried Mr. Jessop, darting forward—"stop half a minute !" adding, "let's see that that chair will carry you, for it's more than all the chairs in this room will do : " adding, "if you'd seen old Archey Ellenger go down, cup of coffee in hand, the other night, you'd have been amused. The old sinner looked as if he thought he was wanted."

Mr. Jessop then took the chair, and, after trying its legs all round, as he would a horse's, stamped it soundly on all fours, saying—

"Yes, I think it'll do."

Mr. Bunting then deposited himself gingerly upon it, and ere

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

three minutes more had elapsed, the sound of wheels outside was followed by the shuffling of feet within, and a faint sound of voices presently swelled into chorus as the coming party advanced to the drawing-room door.

"When are you going to get your door-bell replaced?" asked George Wheeler, as Jovey advanced to greet him.

"Hang the bell!—no ringing allowed here," replied Mr. Jessop, shaking hands, adding, "How are you all? What sort of a night is it?"

"Dinner is on the table," now announced Ambrose, advancing pompously up to the glad group.

"I told you so!" said Mr. Jessop, glancing at his watch, and showing Mr. Bunting that it was half-past six o'clock to a minute. "Come!" added he, taking Mr. Bunting by the arm, "let me show you the way;" so saying, he led him out of the drawing-room across the marble-flagged hall into the dining-room on the opposite side of the way. The spacious room was a perfect blaze of light. Ambrose had just given the fire a polishing stir, and which was lending its radiance to the effulgence of the wax and oil.

On the massive carved side-board at the far end stood the splendid Rough and Ready-shire testimonial—a magnificent candelabra, flanked by a profusion of beautiful glass and family plate.

"Where will you sit? Near the fire or from it?" asked our host, offering his guest the choice of seats at the round table, adding, "any of these chairs will carry you, for our friend Boyston there tries them all at high pressure, and he rides fourteen stone in his nankins."

Mr. Bunting chose the chair with his back to the fire, and the red coats and yellow facings of the Duke's men drawing up, the dark coats followed suit, and the Jug having said grace, quietly slipped his nankins under the table, and began to help the soup—while Ambrose and the footmen plied the plates, and lap, lap, sup, sup, was the order of the day. The dining, like the drawing-room, was large and dirty, the latter being more apparent when contrasted

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

with the brightness of the plate and the snowy whiteness of the linen.

The Hydropathic gentleman used to sluice his patients in the bed-room above, and a continuous flow of drippings had expanded into a sort of large map of Europe on the ceiling. But it is now no time for airified criticism; looking at plaster, and looking at portraits, belongs to a much later period of the evening—these hungry gentlemen are much better employed in discussing Monsieur Ragout's varied and excellent dishes, all sent in beautifully hot, and washing them down with copious draughts of sweet and dry. Monsieur had indeed exerted himself to the utmost, nor had Mrs. Allspice been behind in the sweets and savouries, for which she was so justly famous, and when the Jug's nankins again appeared, all the guests did feel extremely thankful for what they had received.

They then sat at ease, Wheeler turning to Lightfoot, and Daintry to Gumley, each couple with a distinct topic of conversation, while the table was arranged for the second part of the entertainment. A neat dessert, of which nice thin water-biscuits formed a prominent part, being set on, a goodly array of richly-cut decanters presently set sail from before Mr. Jessop—to the toast of "fox-hunting," which immediately raised the doings of the morning, prematurely cut short by the quick announcement of dinner, and the importance of discussing its delicacies under the Jug's injunction of the silent system. Then each man gave his own version of his own doings, explaining how it happened he wasn't up at the finish, one having lost a shoe, another having lost two, a third having followed a bad leader, and vowing he would always take a line of his own for the future—a resolution very often come to after a good dinner.

The Jug, who was a steady "Port-if-you-please man," found a companion in Old Fullerton, while the rest adhered to the excellent claret, which circulated briskly—the Jug keeping himself awake by repeated excursions to the bell, which sometimes rang and sometimes didn't—but, nevertheless, always

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

produced the butler. The pace having somewhat slackened, devil'd biscuits made their appearance, which gave a slight impetus to the evening, and carried the guests through another bottle of Latour. At length the map of Europe began to be studied, the height and length of the room discussed, with occasional conjectures indulged in as to what would have been the fate of the house if Mr. Jessop had not taken it. Sherry then began to be asked for, clean glasses sought, watches slyly looked at, and other symptoms of complete satisfaction given. The Jug and Fullerton still held on with their second bottle of port, but the former seeing the general inclination, trudged away to the old bell-place, and, on Ambrose appearing, said, "We'll take tea and coffee in here, if you please."

Ambrose then retired, and presently reappeared with his attendant aides-de-camp bearing the massive articles of the family plate-chest covered with the usual paraphernalia of the drawing-room, whereupon parties arose from the dining-table, shook their legs, took a turn up and down the room, agreeing that cocoa-nut-matting made a very good carpet, and then drew up to the salvers and sweets—creaming and sugaring themselves, each man to his mind. Meanwhile, the Jug having buzzed the bottle, gradually sunk into a profound sleep, at his end of the table, with his right hand on the glass, and was presently dreaming o'er the events of the day, recalling Mr. Jessop's oft-repeated injunctions in going to cover, to keep the field quiet and not let them press on the hounds, when the Jug, fancying himself again at the cover-side, with the Prince breaking away after the fox, exclaimed, "*Hold hard, you beggar with the beard!*" and raising his glass like a whip, dashed the whole contents full into his own face! Up the Jug jumped half blinded with wine, which streamed from his visage down on to the unfortunate nankins, looking such a figure of fun that even the most sympathising of the guests could not help laughing at him. Mr. Jessop, however, who was used to such scenes, just gave him a napkin to rub himself dry, which the Jug proceeded to do, merely observing that he "must have been dreaming." And this observation operating as a hint upon the dinner guests,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

there was presently a calling for carriages, great-coating, good-nighting, and getting away-ing. It being then past eleven o'clock, and Mr. Bunting declining any further potations, Mr. Jessop and he retired to bed, while the Jug went to have a quiet drink and a rock in his own room.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE BACHELOR BREAKFAST AND BILLY ROUGH'UN.



WHEN Mr. Jovey Jessop awoke the next morning and thought over the events of the preceding day, as he lay cool and comfortable in his curtainless bed, for he was no kinder to himself than he was to his Jug, he felt rather sorry that he had said anything to Mr. Bunting about following Mr. Boyston, for, thought Jovey, our hero might have taken a line of his own, and seen the end of the run, whereas he perhaps thought I told him to follow Tom Boyston for the sake of saving my horse. And being a liberal-minded man, and not liking to do things by halves, Jovey considered how he could put matters right. That was a non-hunting day, but the hounds met at Branforth Bridge on the following one, and the Bold Pioneer would be all the better of the gallop from Brushwood Banks; so he determined if the horse was all right to offer him again to Mr. Bunting. That point decided, he bounded out of bed, and after passing through his bath, proceeded to array himself in a loosely fitting suit of black and green tweed. Though so punctual to his dinner, Mr. Jessop was quite a latitudinarian in the matter of breakfast, and guests just rolled in and rang or called for theirs whenever they liked, each man having his own tea-pot, and water-pot, eggs, muffin, toast, and so on, after the manner of the Clubs, while there was always a plentiful supply of cold meat and game on the side-board, and fish, omelette, and frys in a great iron stand before the fire. So breakfasting continued till everybody was done, when the remains were removed, a clean cloth supplied, and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

the cold meats advanced from the sideboard to the dining-table, for the entertainment of those who might drop in during the day. So long as Mr. Jessop was not obliged to partake, he was always glad to give anybody a luncheon, and the Jug's appetite being accommodating, he found him useful in the eating as well as in the drinking way.

Mr. Jessop having made the tour of the stables and found all right as regarded the Bold Pioneer, dropped into the dining-room just as the Jug was inducting Mr. Bunting into the mysteries of the morning meal, and after the usual good mornings, greetings, and common-places about the weather, he gradually broached the handsome proposition about the horse.

Mr. Bunting was surprised, for he had not lived sufficiently among fox-hunters to know their general kindly disposition, and, moreover, had about arranged in his own mind to take Privett Grove in his way home; but the Jug devoting the intervals between munching a large plate of brawn and washing it down with plentiful libations of tea to seconding Mr. Jessop's proposition, our hero paused in his resolution, and considered whether staying on might not be as agreeable as spending the evening alone at Burton St. Leger. And as Mr. Jessop seemed to be sincere in what he said, and the Jug occasionally threw in an approving tongue between mouthfuls, Mr. Bunting was not very difficult to overcome. Mr. Jessop then rang or rather shook the bell wire for his own breakfast, oatmeal porridge and a thin rumpsteak with fried potatoes, pending which, Monsieur Ragout appeared with his bill of fare for that day, and to receive the compliments of the company for his performance on the preceding one. There is no keeping a French cook up to the collar unless you flatter him well. Cash without compliments won't do; so Mr. Jessop, and the guest, and the Jug, all joined in his praise. Monsieur having passed his bill of fare with the addition of an omelette soufflée at the suggestion of the Jug, then withdrew, and Mr. Jessop proceeded to enjoy his breakfast in the leisurely way of a man who generally has to hurry it. That being his business day, when he went through his accounts, he then bethought him how he could assist his Jug in getting

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

his guest through the interval. Library there was none, at least there were no books in it ; indeed the room was made into a servants' dormitory, and though Mr. Jessop took in the *Times*, and the *Jug Bell's Life* and the *Field*, even these with the assistance of the *Post-Office Directory*, which the Jug was much given to studying, would hardly suffice for a stranger.

"What are you going to do to-day, Tom ?" now asked our master as he played away at his steak, thinking to see if his coadjutor could help him out with an idea.

"Me, oh, why, I—thought of taking a round with the harriers," drawled Boyston, as if he had not quite made up his mind on the matter.

"Ah, to be sure ! the very thing !" replied Mr. Jessop, gaily turning to Mr. Bunting, and saying, "And why shouldn't you go ?"

"I have no horse," replied Mr. Bunting ; who, indeed, did not care much for hunting if it did not include the scarlet.

"Oh, I'll find you a horse," replied Mr. Jessop. "I'll find you a horse—there's my little grey Merrylegs, the very thing for harriers—carry you like winking, won't he, Boyston ?"

"Capitally," replied the Jug, still holding on steadily at his breakfast.

"Just order him when you are inclined to go," then said Mr. Jessop, addressing the Jug.

"I will," replied he, gulping down his last mouthful of tea ; then chucking his napkin away, he arose and stumped leisurely away to the windows with his hands in his side pockets.

"Fine day," observed he, after a good vacant stare outside.

"Oh, fine day," replied Mr. Jessop. "Fine day as can be—I only hope it will keep this way over to-morrow."

"Well, then, I'm ready when you're ready," observed the Jug, addressing Mr. Bunting.

"You'd better say when," replied our hero.

"No hurry with harriers," rejoined the Jug, "can always catch them up ; but as the day's fine, we may as well be in the open air as in the house. So what say you to half an hour ?"

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“ So be it,” said Mr. Bunting, whereupon the Jug stumped away to the stables to order the horses.

Now it so happened that the Jug had just got a new horse ; “ Lofty ” his late owner called him on account of his high action, Billy Rough’un the Jug called him, because of his shaking him so. He was a grand horse with a great inclination for the chase, but he was too many for most people, hence he passed from hand to hand at always receding prices, until he came down to the Jug’s figure—a twenty pound note. And having tried various bits upon him with but indifferent success, our friend bethought him that the best way to prevent Billy pulling his arms off was to give him a little more work, so he resolved to treat him to a round with the harriers the day before hunting with the foxhounds whenever he could. To this end he made the acquaintance of our before-mentioned Jonathan Jobling, who, though no great admirer of the red coats in general—certainly not of those with yellow collars to them—yet agreed out of respect for Mr. Jessop, to send Mr. Boyston his card, provided he did not come out in white cords, of which Jonathan had a mortal aversion, Lord Marchhare having ridden over the pride of his heart, the beautiful Bluebell, when so attired. And the Jug having found the first day with the harriers very beneficial upon his new horse, and not being at all fond of a large washing bill, had no difficulty in complying with the terms, as to omitting the white cords.

So much for the rider, now for a word about the horse.

Billy Rough’un was a grand horse, stood sixteen hands, with strength and speed of the first order. He could go as fast through plough as he could upon grass. He was a darkish bay, with a large star, and a white fore foot, capital legs and loins, with a small well set on head. His fault was being too much of a horse, too keen and anxious to be with hounds, which, combined with a very high rough action, put, as it were, two days’ work into one for his rider. Indeed, if Billy was not regularly worked there was no riding him, and he had nearly shaken the hearts out of half-a-dozen people before the Jug got him. Not that Billy had any vice in him, it was only his

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

impetuosity that made him unpopular. He was a sort of horse that a looker on liked better than the person that was on him. There is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse.

When Billy, then called Lofty, stepped out of Mr. Blandisher the dealer's yard, he was a hundred and ninety guineas' worth, a ten pound note having somehow slipped off his two hundred guinea price during the transaction, and though undoubtedly rough, yet when not in his excited knock-his-knee-against-his-tooth action, by no means an unpleasant horse to ride. He was then the property of Mr. George Dallimore, a weakly constituted gentleman, who had been recommended horse exercise on account of his health; and when George first appeared at Weston Wood side with Lord Furzebrake's hounds, Lofty was pronounced by the *cognoscenti* to be a deuced nice sporting-looking nag. George, however, had not been on him half an hour, before the bay horse had been changed into a white one, and finding as soon as the fox broke away that he must be first (which was by no means George's place) or no where, he thought he had better be no where, and so went home. Blandisher, however, was a kind man, and readily exchanged him for an easy oily going gray,—a sort of animal that would do for a Roseberry Rocks riding-master, and sold Lofty again the next day for about his old figure, Blandisher making an uncommonly handsome profit by the transaction. The next purchaser was one of the same sort, a light man who fancied himself heavy, and wanted something above his weight, which Lofty certainly was, stotting him up and down like a parched pea on a drumhead, tiring him completely and sending him asleep almost as soon as the cloth was drawn after dinner. He then sold him to a youth, with whom Lofty, certainly under great provocation, ran away, whereupon he was pronounced vicious, and quickly came down to the Jug's price, who devised the expedient for curing him we have already mentioned. Billy, however, had no vice in him, it was sheer love of hunting and disgust at being ridden by tailors who had not the sense to appreciate his spirit. If he let people down at little places, it was only because they never gave him a chance at big ones.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

It was no use trying to deceive Billy Rough'un about hunting—no use sending him on alone with a lad in a jacket and trousers, as if he were going to exercise—he knew as well as the genius who saddled him what he was going to do. The first red coat he saw on the road set him on grinding his teeth, fretting and trying to be on—what he wanted was to be with the hounds. Even on the present occasion, when the Jug turned out in his old round-crowned deer-stalking hat, brown sea-side jacket and long leather gaiters, the horse felt by the hunting martingal on his shoulders what he was going to do. And when little Merrylegs came prancing out of the stable for the dandified Mr. Bunting to mount, Billy gave a half squeak, as much as to say, now we'll have some fun together, you and I.

“*W-h-o-a-y!*” cried the Jug, hoisting himself on, adding, “I’ll take the nonsense out of you when I get you on to the Downs.” So saying, he drew reins and piloted our hero out of the yard.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MR. JONATHAN JOBLING'S HARRIERS.



R. JONATHAN JOBLING had two distinct countries, hill and vale; the hill formed of fine open undulating downs, the vale of very stiff, cramped, awkward enclosures. On a clear day nothing could be finer than a gallop over the sound turf of the downs, swelling and falling sufficiently to give zest and impetus to the horse without endangering the neck of the rider. Here, indeed, a man could see hunting in its wildest open form, there being nothing to distract his attention with regard to progression, there not being even the fear of a water furrow in the bottoms. He could go sailing away wherever the hounds went—seeing the find, the forward, the double, the triple, the Gordian knot itself unravelled.

Jonathan was a real great man, stood six feet two in his stocking feet, and weighed twenty stone, at least, that was his reputed weight, for he had declined the scales for many years before the period of our story. He had begun hunting when bed-gown coats were the order of the day, a fashion that he still retained, and now had as much cloth in each lap as would make a moderate sized modern exquisite a coat. How many bed-gowns the great white mother-of-pearl buttons with the black hares engraved upon them had worn out, it was impossible to say; Jonathan himself having lost all count of them. They were numerous, and yet Jonathan was not the man to give up a coat upon slight provocation. They descended gradually, the shiny No. I. of sunny weather, being a long time before it

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

became the faded No. II. of doubtful days, still longer ere it was the patched and tattered No. III. of desperate wet and stormy ones. Number IV. generally occupied the post of a "flay craw," in the fields. His boots and breeches corresponded with his coat, large, roomy, and rough, drab with brass buttons, and boots brown without effect, while his ponderous hammer-headed whip in the hands of a misguided man, would be enough to make the blood curdle in one's veins. His horses of course were of the largest, most formidable order, and to see Jonathan tearing away after his hounds with his great coat flaps flying out, followed by the usual miscellaneous assortment of a harrier field gave him much the appearance of a gigantic hen and chickens. But we are going to have a day, or rather half a day, with him at Missendon rubbing post, so we had better be getting on as he is a man to a minute, and never waits for anyone.

The rubbing post was at least five miles from Appleton Hall—that is to say, five miles by the road—but the Jug with his great geographical knowledge and acquaintance with gaps and short cuts could ride it in three and a half or four. First he took the liberty of going through the Rev. Mr. Spintext's glebe, then he was sure Widow Weatherly would have no objection to their passing along the top of her seeds, though he knew Widow Weatherly had the greatest possible objection to anything of the sort; next he cut off a large angle equal to a quarter of a mile, by trespassing up Squire Cracklow's carriage road, and boring through his young plantation into the Burtreeford turnpike, which latter, however, he quickly forsook for a pet line of gates through Mr. Blatherwick's farm, then past the Punch Bowl Inn, through Thurlestone fivelanes to the little village of Barrymore at the foot of the downs, whose ascent he then made by the zig-zag road up the sides, passing up into an entirely different region to the one they had left—wild, open, undulating downs, with nothing but plovers and tinkling-belled sheep to disturb the serenity of the scene. Billy Rough'un then applied himself vigorously to the sound turf, and went snorting and cantering away in evident enjoyment of the change, accompanied by little Merrylegs, who seemed equally pleased.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

Having thus opened their pipes by some three-quarters of a mile gallop, the Jug looked at his fat watch, and finding they were in plenty of time, the friends pulled up just as Jonathan appeared with his hounds on the brow of the opposite hill, attended by farmers Brushfield and Jacobstow, all straining their eyes and wondering who the deuce these strangers could be. As they approached, Jonathan saw it was the Jug, whereupon he gave his old sugar-loaf shaped cap an upward poke off his brow, and said he hoped Mr. Jovey Jessop was well.

"Quite well," replied the Jug, "thank you;" adding, "you'd better come and dine with us after hunting and see."

"*Humph!*" grunted Jonathan, "what time does he feed?"

"Six thirty," replied the Jug, "six thirty to a minute."

"Dinner!" exclaimed Jonathan, raising his eye-brows, "soouper, I should say."

"Get an omelette soufflée," added the Jug, recollecting his own order.

"What'nt a thing's that?" asked the master of harriers, erecting his great whip like a column on his leg.

"Come and see," said the Jug.

"No-r, batter puddin', if you like," muttered Jonathan, after a pause; "batter puddin', if you like, but none of your messes."

Up then came the old customer, Cordey Brown, with his spurs in his hat, thinking nobody would know he had gone out to hunt, followed by Jack Pole, Billy Brickworth, and Tom Talford, the tippling farrier, who has lain overnight at the sign of the Punch Bowl, and has very much the appearance of one himself. All are either dressed in green coats or the dark clothes and strong lower garments of men bent on defying the united attacks of weather and woods. There was nothing like a white top-boot, let alone a pair of white cords amongst them. A hunt was what they wanted and came for.

Jonathan's, like Jovey's, was quite a working establishment, nothing for show or appearance. But Jonathan, unlike Jovey,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

was a queer morose sort of chap, who could be extremely disagreeable when he liked. If one of the over-riding red coats was to tell Jonathan he had seen the hare pass through a gap or a gate, Jonathan would immediately hold the hounds the opposite way, muttering something about it had most likely been a cat. Not that anybody ever was rash enough to come out with Jonathan in red ; but he had a certain instinctive knowledge of those who wore it, and always dreaded their jealous rivalry and rushing for a start.

"Bad word it, sir !" he would exclaim. "Do you think I'd bring out these sixteen couple of beautiful 'arriers if I wanted you to catch the 'are? Do, please, hold hard whilst they try to make it out, or at all events get off your horse and put your nose to the ground yourself." Now for our particular day.

Time being up, and all the field come or accounted for, and Cordey Brown having unbagged and buckled on the clandestine spurs, Jonathan now moved his beautiful hounds to a few acres of fallow on the right of the rubbing post, whose depth of soil had been too much for the farmer to resist, and ere he had gone half over the ground up started puss, with a flounce that sent the sandy soil up into the air, looking as terrified as an old maid when a man offers to shake hands with her without his glove on.

Away she scuttled at best pace, every hound in full view, gaining upon them, and looking as if she would leave her competitors immeasurably in the lurch. A patch of gorse on the brow of the hill hid her from further view and brought the late screeching pack fairly to their noses. There was a good scent with which they swept down in a cluster into the vale, and rose the opposing hill with undiminished dash. Meanwhile the field went coolly and fairly away, all except the Jug, who was borne impetuously along by the over-anxious, boring Billy Rough'un. Getting him down into the bottom, however, with a fine grassy slope in front, the Jug eased him out gently, and ere Billy reached the top the Jug had the satisfaction of feeling his impetuosity gradually subside, when, giving him a touch of the spur, as much as to say,



BILLY ROUGH'UN WENT SAILING ALONG.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“Come, old boy, we are not done yet,” he at length landed him on the top of the rising ground, with every apparent disposition to be quiet. The Jug then held back a little for Jonathan Jobling and his tail to come up, when falling into the ruck, Billy Rough’un and he went sailing along very comfortably together, along the brow of Lingfield Hill, past Silverdown Quarry, over Polestar Peak by Brockenden Barn, sinking the hill, and so down into the enclosures of the vale below. These were large and roomy, and puss having traversed the first, a field of seeds, diagonally swerved to the left, and after making a Gordian knot, finally threw herself with a surprising bound into a ragged boundary fence between Bickington and Fittiss’s farms, composed of the usual confusion of brushwood, dead wood, old harrows, and anything.

The pace having been severe, and the return pretty sure, several of the field, the fat ones in particular, pulled up and sat mopping themselves on the side of the hill, from whence a secure view of the further performance was obtained ; but Jonathan, as in duty bound, went skating down the steep side followed by the Jug, Mr. Bunting, and such others as felt sure their steeds could get up again. The hare had now puzzled the pack, and there was nothing for it but patience and letting them try to make it out for themselves. So Jonathan having pulled up at a respectful distance, sat shading his eyes from the sun, watching their bustling anxiety, but inability to proceed.

At length they had so foiled the ground that it was no use letting them persevere any longer, and there was nothing for it but to help them. So, advancing and passing through the familiar gap, he made a forward cast to be certain she was not on, and then returned to belabour the hedge, when a very few cracks of the great whip sent her flying out of her form, one ear lobbing one way, the other another, looking as if she didn’t know which leg to put first. Having recovered her surprise, she presently got into her stride, and went bowling away to the joy of the hill-siders, and the excitement of the pack, who strained every nerve as before. Jonathan hugged his great

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

horse Humpty Dumpty, and went labouring after them, grinning with delight at the feat. Billy Rough'un, too, dropped quietly on his bit, and took the enclosures as if conscious he would have to contend with the hills. Nor was Billy out in his reckoning, for the hare now treated the field to a turn round the base of Bossington Hill, and then regained the downs by the gorge between it and the Chapel, when, getting breath, she again scuttled along the brow of the general range of undulating hills, the now re-united field following the pressing pack with every demonstration of joy and delight. Foremost went Jobling, grinning and hugging his horse in a high state of enthusiasm at the round he was giving the red-coats, hoping Mr. Boyston would see the marvellous hits of old Lavender, and appreciate the guidance of Leader. On, on they went, all plain sailing and smooth, nothing to hinder or distract the attention, no asking the way over Bartnaby Bog, no offering of Huggins to hold Wiggins's horse while he pulled out a gap or opened a gate for the rest.

At length, on passing Barricane Barn, puss met with an impediment. Tom Hollowjaw's, the shepherd poacher's stump-tailed lurcher, Teaser, turned her, and but for the deficiency of helm would in all probability have killed her. As it was he got a mouthful of fur, and sent her flying down Banfield footway instead of pursuing her easier line along the brow of the hill. This greatly aggravated her discomfort, already sufficiently taxed by the vehement clamour of her pursuers behind. Still, like Jovey Jessop's Brushwood Banks fox, she had been hunted before, and did not despair of escaping again. So she exerted herself to the utmost, and speeding along put as much space between herself and her followers as ever she could. Thus she traversed Towlsworthy Hill, dipped into Watergate Valley, and again made for higher ground on Warleighworth Wold. Still the cry of the hounds and the cheer of the fat huntsman pursued her, and made her wish for a friend to relieve her. There were plenty of hares if one would but get up—plenty of hares if one would but get up! But alas! no friend was by.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

The fox is always supposed to be a gentleman, and the hare a lady; and though the sexes are sometimes transposed, the terms remain the same, and exercise a considerable influence in the chase. The fox is pursued with a vehement ardour, if not an inveterate hatred; everybody has something to say against him—while a little turnip nibbling and wheat cropping is about the worst that can be laid to the charge of poor puss.

Still a hare takes a deal of hunting, especially on a bad scenting day, and those who have been at the trouble of unravelling her steps, watching the working of Lilter and Tilter and Wonderful, don't like to be baulked of their prize in the end, even though they are regardless after they have got it. On the present occasion, with two strangers out, of course it would not do to be beat, and Jonathan worked with assiduous care. All the field, too, were careful, each man feeling his credit involved in the performance of the pack.

Our hare, which was a buck and a stout one, had now done the field good service. She had given them a very pretty lead out, or rather round, of some two miles in the first instance, one in the second with a straight shoot out, and a curve for the third. Though the hounds flew over the downs, they made it out tolerably well on the fallows, their merry sterns twinkling when they would hardly trust their tongues to say the scent was there. At length a chalky fallow brought them studiously to their noses, and Jonathan, feeling that killing time was come, crept gently on, to be ready to save her in the last extremity. The field followed their great leader's example, many of them looking alternately at the hounds and the Jug's stolid unappreciative countenance. The pace gradually slackened until the hounds almost stopped upon the drab fallow.

Jonathan now drew rein, and sat transfixed. He was sure she was somewhere there. Humpty Dumpty presently gave himself a hearty shake, when up bounced puss right under his nose, and with a desperate effort to gain the opposite hedgerow, twisting and turning from her numerous open-mouthed pursuers, was finally snapped by Mariner, over whom Jollity and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Jovial immediately rolled, when the whole pack poured in like bees at a hive, and the kill was complete.

Jonathan was amongst them in the twinkling of an eye, and from a ground worry the scene changed into a high in air trophy, with the glad pack baying and jumping and pawing the stout British yeoman.

"WHO-HOOP!" holloed Jonathan, with a voice that made the hills echo.

"Who-hoop!" responded Cordey Brown, from the thick of the field.

"*Well hunted!*" cried Telford, who paid his subscription in flattery.

"Deuced well!" assented Brickworth, mopping his brow.

"Five - and - fifty minutes!" announced Pole, who was time-keeper to the hunt.

Jonathan, having duly exhibited his victim, now proceeded to disembowel her and give his favourites a taste of her blood; after which, having got his hands licked pretty clean, the herculean huntsman advanced to the Jug with the hare in his hand, saying, "You were good enough to ax me to dine off a scoffa—but scofflas are not in my way—but if you'd accept a hunted hare, I shall be very glad to give you her," holding the hare up to the Jug as he spoke.

"Thank you," said the Jug, taking her and fastening her into Billy Rough'un's hunting martingal.

"And make my compliments to Mr. Jessop," continued Jonathan, helping him.

"I will," said the Jug.

"No better sportsman than Mr. Jessop," continued Jonathan, thinking unless it were himself.

"Well, now, we are going to Somerslease Hill," continued he, when they had got the hare adjusted. "There we shall find another stout 'un, get on to fresh ground, and have another good gallop."

"I think I must be going home," replied the Jug, adding, "I'm going to ride this horse with the fox-hounds to-morrow."

"So," said Jonathan. "Well, then, sir, I'll bid you good

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

morning," tendering him his still rather blood-stained hand as he spoke.

The Jug shook it and said "good morning " too.

Jonathan then hoisted his great sternpost into the saddle, and, calling his handy hounds together, proceeded onwards, leaving our friends to journey home in the contrary direction.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXX.

PRIVETT GROVE AGAIN.



“**W**ONDER where we are,” now observed Mr. Bunting, looking about him, as their mutually receding steps soon put a wide space between our friends and the field.

“I know,” replied the Jug. “This is Okers Over; that,” nodding to a little hamlet embedded among large bare-branched trees beneath the shelter of a swelling hill, “is Bluemeadows; at the back of it we get upon Bleakendale edge, and can either go home by the road or the fields, whichever you like.”

“My name’s ‘easy,’” replied Mr. Bunting; adding, “I suppose there’s nothing to do before dinner?”

“Nothing, unless you’ll like to go to the kennel and look over the hounds.”

“No—no; not in my way,” rejoined our hero; “that’s an old-fashioned proceeding,” added he.

“Well, then, we’ll just saunter quietly home by the road,” rejoined the Jug, dropping the reins on the neck of the now subdued Billy Rough’un, and diving into his side-pocket for the conversation-stopping weed. He presently had a large Lopez cigar, blowing a cloud round his harvest-moon face. The two then jogged on quietly together through Filterton, Swimmingdale, and the little villages of Lofield and Upton. After passing the corn-mill the road rises over Warringborough Hill, and though no great hand at recognizing a country, it somehow struck Mr. Bunting that he had seen this one before—stacks by a barn—chimneys among trees—it was very like the ground about Privett Grove.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"What place is that?" now asked he, trotting his horse up alongside Billy Rough'un.

"That," rejoined the Jug, "that," repeated he, with his usual careless indifference, "that's what's-its-name—where the widow with the pretty daughter lives."

"Thought so," said Mr. Bunting, gaily.

"What, do you know them?" asked the Jug.

"A little," replied Mr. Bunting, "a little."

"Suppose we call," suggested the Jug.

"With all my heart," replied our hero.

"If you know them well, I can take you a short cut to the stables through the fields," said the Jug, pointing to a weak place in the hedge they were passing, where the hoof marks of a horse were still visible—this being one of the Jug's short cuts to cover.

"Perhaps we may as well go the front way," observed Mr. Bunting, our hero knowing that ladies do not like to be taken by surprise.

"P'r'aps we may," assented the Jug, thinking to finish his cigar. So saying he passed the place and plodded on to the gate. "This is the way in," said he, opening and pushing it back, as if his companion was a perfect stranger to Privett Grove. The Jug then, having thrown his cigar-end away, produced a black pocket-comb, and, uncovering his bristles, proceeded to give them and his stubbly whiskers a good stirring up. He then riddled the comb out and offered it to our friend, who, however, preferred giving his curls a run through with his fingers to availing himself of it. So the Jug pocketed it without further to do. This performance brought them to the diverging road to the stables, which the Jug, pointing out, said, "Shall we put our horses up and go in, or how?"

"Better go up to the house and inquire if they are at home, which will give the ladies time to put on their best bibs and tuckers."

"Well," said the Jug, turning Billy Rough'un's head up the road. The horses then paced quietly on, wondering what was going to happen. The "invisible guardian" of the house saw

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

the approaching guests and gave the alarm ere the vociferous door-bell responded to the hearty summons of the Jug. He pulled as if he would pull the knob out of the socket.

The difference of the sexes is strikingly shown in the matter of visitors. Ladies are always at home to them; gentlemen never. As soon as the bell sounds, the ladies whip away their uncompany-like work, and after glancing at themselves in the mirror, subside into a company posture; while the gentlemen hurry away to intercept the servant, and whisper lowly but vehemently "*not at home*" as he passes. Sometimes, indeed, the excommunicating order is general and positive—"never at home to anyone;" while the exceptional guests of the ladies are few and far between. Of course we are speaking of middle life, one servant being quite unequal to exclude or to carry in the card of a caller in high life—there must be a shoal of them there to do that.

Our old friend John Thomas, in well-put-on clean stockings and neatly-stringed shoes, smiled as he opened wide the door for admission, whereupon the Jug, who was better pleased with Billy Rough'un, said, "if Mr. Bunting would give him his horse, he would take them round to the stable and get them some gruel;" so saying he laid hold of Merrylegs' bridle and trudged away to the diverging road he had coveted before. Arrived at the stable, with the aid of Old Gaiters he got what he wanted, and having thrown a sheet over each horse, he returned to the front door, where he found the footman waiting to receive him. Following his guide, he presently made the head-foremost descent into the drawing-room that our hero had done on a former occasion. Indeed he did worse, for he almost landed in Mrs. McDermott's lap, who was contemplating her daughter and Mr. Bunting as they sat upon the sofa—wondering if he was to be any "thing more" to her or not, and all that sort of thing. "Oh dear, that door!" exclaimed she, as the Jug recovered himself after his stumble; "oh dear, that door! wish we could devise some means of curing it—it is so disagreeable making such a sudden descent."

"It is," said the Jug, who now felt the full effect of the truism.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Miss Rosa then came forward to greet our unaffected friend, after which they all got into places again, and the chirp of conversation was presently renewed—surprised at seeing them together—supposed they had been hunting—harriers, and so on.

Cake and wine presently made its appearance, and were placed on the table, whereupon the Jug, after a good steady stare at the cut-glass decanter, arose from his chair, and, helping bumpers all round, proceeded to distribute them—one to Mamma, one to Miss, one to Mr. Bunting, and, of course, one to himself. The ladies looked at theirs, Mr. Bunting sipped at his, but the Jug, after ruminating over a good mouthful, finally swallowed it, and then took off the rest at a gulp.

“Good wine,” said he to Mrs. McDermott, nursing the glass on his knee, as if he meant to have another—“good wine! McKinnel’s, I should say,” smacking his thick lips.

“No, it is some I have had in the house a long time,” replied Mrs. McDermott, with a sigh; whereupon the Jug, seeing he had touched a wrong chord, helped himself to another glass, which very soon went the same way as the first one. Still he sat with his empty glass on his knee, as though he might be tempted to fill it again.

“Won’t you take a little cake?” now asked Mrs. McDermott, inclining her hand towards it.

“Thank you,” replied the Jug—“thank you, I will presently,” then, recollecting himself, he added, “Won’t you take a little, Mam?”

Mrs. McDermott declined, so did Miss Rosa, and Mr. Bunting, who was making play on the sofa, would not take any either.

The Jug then, after a pause, looked first at the cake, then at the wine, then at his feet, and finally rising, helped himself to a good thick slice of cake.

“Good eating requires good drinking,” observed he to Mrs. McDermott, as he helped himself to another glass of wine, and then resumed his seat by her side.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"So it does," assented Mrs. McDermott, "and hunting makes people hungry."

"Very," replied the Jug, munching away at the cake.

"Mr. Jovey Jessop is very fond of hunting, I suppose," said she.

"Very," replied the Jug.

"I wonder he doesn't get married," observed Mrs. McDermott, "he would be much more comfortable with a wife, I should think."

"*Humph*—don't know that," thought the Jug, taking a liberal mouthful of wine.

"Plenty of elegant, accomplished girls in the world," observed Mrs. McDermott, looking at her daughter.

"No doubt," replied the Jug—"no doubt," adding, after a pause, "only, for my part, I don't know but I would rather have a wife that could set a good dinner on the table than one that could talk Greek."

"Well, but she might do both," observed Mamma.

"Seldom," replied the Jug—"seldom—all go for show—happy medium's the thing—happy medium's the thing," finishing the contents of his glass as he spoke.

Mamma then lowered her voice, and a subdued confidential conversation ensued between her and the Jug, which greatly facilitated Mr. Bunting's approaches to the daughter. He felt that he got on better with her than he had done since the Pic Nic at Roseberry Rocks. He almost thought he might offer.

The friends were so comfortable that each waited for the other to give the hint to rise, and if the premature shades of one of those short winter days that appear so impossible in the fine long drawn ones of summer had not begun to obscure the room, there is no saying but they might have sat over the dinner-hour at Appleton Hall. The Jug's inward monitor, however, coinciding with the waning day, caused him to haul up his great warming-pan of a watch, when dangling it by its jack-chain, he asked his companion if he knew what o'clock it was? Of course—"With her conversing," Mr. Bunting had

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

forgotten “all time,” and was perfectly astonished when he was told what it was, but there was no gainsaying the fact, or that they had sat quite long enough for a call—so the Jug rising, and helping himself to another glass of sherry *en passant*, asked permission to ring the bell for the horses.

And now, while they are bringing them, we will retrograde a little, and tell how Miss Rosa came to be in a more affable humour than usual.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE NEW BONNET.



THE day after our hero's former visit to Privett Grove, Mrs. McDermott thought it her duty to go to Mayfield and tell Mrs. Goldspink what had happened. They had been such old friends, and the young people had always been so intimate, that she would not like Mrs. Goldspink to hear of anything likely to affect her daughter's happiness from anyone but herself. At the same time she could not go open-mouthed as though she thought they had achieved a great triumph, but just drop in in a quiet neighbourly way and broach the subject carelessly in the course of conversation.

People wanting to see the real essence of diplomacy should watch two discreet matronly ladies trying to outwit one another. They approach with all the caution of chess-players, and go quite as much upon looks as they do upon words. It is here that the people who dabble in ink-shed fail. They can't see the effect of their observations, insinuations, aggravations—or whatever they indulge in. It is no uncommon thing to hear ladies say, "I would give anything to see So-and-so's face when she reads this," which shows the importance they attach to a view. Of course the invading party has the advantage, being ready primed for the occasion, with plenty of time for conning and calculating contingencies, and considering what they shall say if things take an unexpected turn. Upon this sort of mission Mrs. McDermott proceeded to visit her good friend Mrs. Goldspink.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

As the weather was cold, and Miss Rosa now worked her white pony severely, Mrs. McDermott drove into Mayfield in her brougham, Gaiters assuming a gaudy, many-buttoned, livery-coat for the purpose of piloting the ewe-necked mare, who looked much better in harness than she did when under the saddle. Of course Mrs. McDermott did not drive direct to the object of her mission, but hovered about the market-place, calling at the tinner's, the glazier's, the butcher's, the baker's, the bonnet-shop. Our watchful banker, however, was on the look-out.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivin's twenty-one—here's Mrs. McD.,” said our friend to himself, as through his little peephole in the bank window he saw her draw up and dart into the milliner's—"and sivin's twenty-eight—what a go it would be if she should happen to buy the bonnet Mrs. G.'s been bargainin' for."

The visit to the bonnet-shop occupied more time than all the other calls put together, and "sivin and four" was interrupted in his peeping by a clerk coming in with a bill that he did not altogether approve of, for, though it had a good many names to it (Cordey Brown's among the number), there was not one that they were particularly fond of. So, after twisting, and turning, and considering it, the clerk at length returned with it from the little den, and passing behind the counter, handed it back to the old farmer who brought it, saying, "it was not quite convenient to do it just then."

"Wy, wy," replied the ancient, nothing daunted—"wy, wy—ar'll call again in hafe an oour or so."

Just as the clerk had got rid of the customer, the quiet rolling hum of a carriage was heard round the corner, which was quickly followed by a knock and a ring at the banker's front door.

"That's her!" said old Goldspink to himself, "that's her—let's see if she's got the new bonnet." So saying, he whipped up his clotty old pewter inkstand, and telling the junior clerk to replenish it, passed on through the bank into the parlour beyond, and was presently in command both of the street door

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

and the house passage. He heard the quiet foot-fall of the maid, the opening of the front door, the inquiry and answer; saw the touch of the hat repetition at the brougham side, the turn of the plated-handle, and the falling open of the door—when out came a hat and feather.

“That’s it! green with a bunch of tiger lilies inside,” exclaimed he. “That’s it! green with a bunch of tiger lilies inside! Was there ever such luck as that?” And our banker’s heart smote him when he remembered how he had advised Mrs. Goldspink to hold off, thinking to get the hat for something less than was asked.

Meanwhile Mrs. McDermott, very well pleased with her purchase, followed the maid up stairs, thinking that in all probability the discussion would open with a dissertation on the new head gear. But Mrs. Goldspink, who had seen the brougham meandering about the market-place and finally draw up at Mrs. Muslin’s, had her misgivings as to what might happen, and a very hasty glimpse as Mrs. McDermott alighted confirmed her worst fears. If Mrs. Muslin hadn’t got two bonnets exactly alike, which was not probable, she really believed Mrs. McDermott had bought hers. However, she would soon see.

“Please, M’am, Mrs. McDermott,” now announced Sairey the maid, ushering the visitor into the low heavy-ceilinged apartment of the old house; whereupon Mrs. Goldspink, though perfectly aware who was coming, arose and greeted her with well-feigned surprise. She was “so glad” to see her—“quite charmed”—and thereupon she gave her a second squeeze, and then backed her down into an indifferently stuffed easy chair. Sure enough there was the coveted bonnet, looking all the more tempting from now being in the possession of another.

“Well and how are all here?” asked Mrs. McDermott.

“Pretty much as usual—pretty much as usual,” a something swelling in Mrs. Goldspink’s throat that nearly choked her. “How’s Rosa?”

“Oh, Rosa’s quite well—Rosa’s quite well—had an unexpected visit from a gentleman she met at Roseberry Rocks.”

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Goldspink, wondering if her visitor had bought the new bonnet to come and tell her of it in. However, she would not gratify her vanity by asking her any questions either about the beau or the bonnet. Coming in this sort-of-way looked rather like adding insult to injury, and Mrs. Goldspink was not a lady to be put upon. If Mrs. McDermott did not know Jasper's worth, she did, and there was no occasion for any subserviency to her. Let Rosa take the gentleman she had met at Roseberry Rocks if she liked.

So contenting herself with the simple "Indeed," she rose and rang for the conversation-stopping cake.

Mrs. McDermott was fairly posed ; baffled upon two points, either of which would be enough to engage the undivided attention of most women. What could it mean ? Somebody must have told. Her evil genius Mrs. Simey—that woman was always thwarting her. She would sound Mrs. Goldspink on the subject. "Had she seen their friend Mrs. Simey lately?"

No ; Mrs. Goldspink hadn't seen her she didn't know when—certainly not since the autumn.

Then, thought Mrs. McDermott, it will be Mrs. Wedderburn ; and she immediately transferred her stock of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness to her. Had Mrs. Goldspink seen Mrs. Wedderburn lately ?

No ; she hadn't seen her either.

Mrs. McDermott was posed, for she could not think of any one else who owed her a good turn. So she sat mute, wondering what it meant. At length she took her departure, feeling assured that Jasper had fallen in with some one he liked better than Rosa, and thinking it was fortunate Mr. Bunting had come down. So the reader will understand the favourable circumstances under which our hero paid his second visit to Privett Grove.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE RIDE HOME.



HE reader will now understand how it was that Mr. Bunting felt he had made greater progress with Miss Rosa than he had done upon any recent occasion. The bonnet had stood his best friend, though the Jug had certainly contributed to his success. While our hero was plying his softest soft nonsense into Miss Rosa's ear, the Jug was sherrying and enunciating some very comfortable domestic platitudes into "Mamma's," whom he inwardly settled was a very sensible, agreeable woman. He would be (sip) bound to say (sop) that (sip) lady would make a steady respectable man very (sop) comfortable—what nice sherry it was (gulp)—dare say'd she would have some port to correspond. The house too was very nice, barring the down step into the drawing-room. Where two could dine, three could dine (sip)—certainly capital sherry; and so the Jug with more gumption than he seemed to possess, proceeded to glance at the question of amalgamation,—Boyston Park, Appleton Hall horses, boot jack, picture, and all. He didn't see why it shouldn't do. This double intercourse going on, it was not to the interest of either party to move an adjournment, and if the day had not done it for them, there is no saying how long they might have sat. Even the Jug's "scoffla" might have been forgotten. At length, premature evening came to the rescue, and hinted that they ought to be going home.

However parties may watch one another, and think they

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

read their feelings by their eyes, there is one proceeding that completely baffles them, namely, the amount of fervour put into the squeeze of the hand at parting. Without going into particulars, we may say that both our friends mounted their horses, each perfectly satisfied with the result of the visit. The Jug was even gay, and tried to strike up a tune as he jogged Billy Rough'un down the carriage drive on to the road.

"Nice ladies," said he, stooping to unlatch the gate, and swinging it open for our friend to follow.

"*Very*," replied Mr. Bunting, with an emphasis.

"No idea that you knew them," observed the Jug, reining up alongside our friend. "No idea that you knew them. Have you ever been in this country before?"

"No," replied our friend; "I met them in the summer at Roseberry Rocks."

"Ah, I heard they were away somewhere," observed the Jug, adding, "I didn't know where it was."

"It was there," rejoined Mr. Bunting; and having given his companion this piece of information, he thought to have a little out of him in return. "Tell me," said he, jerking his head back at it as he spoke, "is that place their own?"

"No; rented," replied the Jug, seeing the point.

"*Hem!*" mused Mr. Bunting, doubting whether it was safe to go further with his inquiries. The Jug might tell Mamma, and that would not do.

The Jug then lighted a large Manilla cigar, and proceeded to fumigate his face, until he arrived at the first of a series of gaps by which he sought to lessen the distance to Appleton Hall, by a diagonal cut across country. Farmer Grafton, however, had anticipated the movement by making up the introductory gap in a more summary way than is usual in the middle of a hunting season.

"Rot the fellow!" exclaimed the Jug, halting before it, and looking at the stout perpendicular post with its strong interlacings of black thorn and white.

"Rot the fellow! he deserves to have a fresh hole bored in every rood of his fence," repeated the Jug, putting Billy



"I'LL HAVE IT OUT," SAID HE.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Rough'un close up to the place, and trying to pull the post out with his hand as he sat. It was too firmly driven in for that.

"I'll have it out," said he, dismounting and handing his horse to our hero.

The Jug then ascended the little mud bank, and after a series of struggles and wrestles, succeeded in drawing the post from its place. "Nasty unhandsome behaviour," said he, knocking the other impediments out of the way as he spoke. "Nasty unhandsome behaviour; I nearly broke my neck in making this gap, and now he seeks to deprive me of the fruits of my labour."

The road being now clear, the Jug resumed Billy Rough'un, and leading him over the gap, remounted with the post over his shoulder.

"What are you going to do with it?" now asked our hero.

"I'll put it where they won't get it again," replied the Jug, rousing Billy Rough'un into a canter with a touch of the spur, and threading a variety of fences with a knowledge of outlets that was perfectly astonishing. Whenever Mr. Bunting thought they were irrecoverably pounded, the Jug solved the mystery with a swerve or a turn to some heretofore invisible opening. So they proceeded from fallow to pasture, from pasture to seeds, from seeds among turnips, in a sort of hands-across-and-back-again, down-the-middle-and-up-again dance of agricultural variety.

At length they approached a few cottages, in the little garden attached to one of which was a red-cloaked old woman gathering kindling wood from the fence.

"There, old girl!" cried the Jug, chucking the post over the hedge to her as he spoke—"There! there's something to make the pot boil."

"Thank you, sir," cried the woman, hurrying to take it up, thinking what a fine fire it would make for the evening. "Thank you, sir," repeated she as she clutched it.

"Sha'n't be troubled with that again," observed the Jug, now swinging back a very rickety gate leading on to a very rutty road.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

They kept its course for some half mile, when squeezing through a ragged belt of fir plantation, and availing themselves of a fallen place in the haw haw, the Jug "whoayed" Billy Rough'un as he got upon grass, and looking back, asked our hero if he knew where he was.

"Not the slightest idea," replied Mr. Bunting, looking around.

"Home," said the Jug, pointing to the stable lights twinkling in front.

"Who'd have thought it!" rejoined Mr. Bunting.

"Nothing like knowing a country," observed the Jug.

"Nothing," assented Mr. Bunting, adding, "I shouldn't have thought we were halfway there yet."

"Nor should we," replied the Jug, "if I hadn't pulled out that post;" adding, "It's not fair after a man has been at the trouble of studying a country, and establishing his gaps, to stop him in that sort of way."

As our friends advanced over the greensward, the trod of horses' feet became more frequent, until the grass was altogether obliterated with the repetition of their hoofs as the line of march led up to the stables.

Entering the yard, the Jug gave one of his familiar holloas, which brought out as well Billy Button as the man who had the charge of little Merrylegs.

Having taken the hare from the saddle, and given his orders for the morrow, the Jug led the way into the house by the same way as he had introduced Mr. Bunting on his first arrival.

"Anybody dine here?" asked he, as he met a footman in the passage leading into his bed-room.

"Yez-ir, Mr. Gurney Busbey does."

"Oh, does he?" replied the Jug; "then we shall want an anchovy toast," which meant a second bottle of port, Gurney Busbey being one of the gentlemen against whom it was the Jug's office especially to provide, and very ready he was so to do. So Busbey and Boyston had their bottle a-piece of Hutton's thirty-four port, while Mr. Jessop and our hero sipped their quiet bottle of Latour, and all arose apparently equally sober. And the Jug having at length seen his companion

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

buttoned into his booby hutch, retired to his bed-room to rock in his chair, and con over the events of the day; and about three o'clock in the morning, he returned a mental verdict to himself, that he "might do a great deal worse than"—the reader knows what. So saying, he off with his nankins and turned into bed.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

BRANFORTH BRIDGE.



B. Ready.

OOTS and breeches again !
What boys for boots and breeches ! Here is Mr. Jovey Jessop all red and yellow, all hurry and confusion, as keen as if he had never seen a fox or a hound in his life. Here is the old hot and heavy Jug, too, red up to the crown ; and here, too, is Mr. Bunting very smart and orthodox, moving leisurely about as an easy going exquisite ought to do. It will not be a hunt that will put Mr. Bunting out of his way.

“Horse on ?” (munch, slunch, munch), asks Mr. Jessop, with his nose well down to the

porridge plate.

“Ride him myself,” grunts the Jug, trudging away to the well supplied plate-warmer at the fire for some kidneys.

“Take Mr. (slunch, munch) Bunting then with me,” observes Mr. Jessop, who is going on wheels.

“Thank you,” replies our hero, now falling to with his breakfast, to be ready in time.

Munch, crunch, sip, sop, sup, was then the order of the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

day, varied by occasional exclamations of tea! toast! egg! or whatever the party wanted, a footman hovering round the breakfast-table to supply all rising demands on the instant.

Mr. Jessop was done first—"Ten minutes!" exclaimed he, rising and looking at his watch as he wiped his mouth, and threw his napkin away; "Ten minutes, if you please," repeated he, hurrying out of the room.

"Sharp's the (munch, crunch) word here," observed the Jug, labouring away at the beef-steak and fried potatoes.

"So it seems," replied Mr. Bunting, putting on a little more steam.

"Never knew (crunch) Jessop late in my (munch) life," observed the Jug, filling his useful mouth full of muffin.

"By the (munch, crunch) way, you'll not forget my (crunch, munch) boot jack," observed he, looking up at Mr. Bunting.

"Oh no, I've laid it on the toilet table to be ready to bring down."

"Thank ye," replied the Jug, adding, "I nearly lost it one day by lending it to a friend, whose groom would insist that it belonged to his master's dressing-case, and was walking away with it under his arm when I met him."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Bunting, thinking it would have been no great matter if he had lost it.

"Rather a neat (munch, crunch) article," observed the Jug, between mouthfuls.

"Well, yes, no, middling," replied Mr. Bunting from out of his tea cup—"the fact is," said he, setting the empty vessel down, "I don't know, but it would be better without the fold—the joint you know."

"Why so?" asked the Jug.

"The fact is, I have rather a fleshy frog, and it nipped me as I stood upon it."

"Ah, well it bit me that way too once," replied the Jug, "but that was because I hadn't my (crunch) slipper on—should put your (munch) slipper on when you draw off your (crunch) boot."

The clank of a spur followed by the crack of a whip now sounded in the entrance-hall, and just at the moment a quick

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

stepping bay whisked round with the dog-cart, and pulled up at the front door.

“ Now then ! time’s up ! ” cried Mr. Jessop ; and in rushed a footman to announce that “ master was ready.”

“ Well, then, adieu for the present,” said Mr. Bunting to the Jug, as he rose to obey the summons, and investing himself in a roomy Napoleon gray overcoat, he put on his hunting-cap, and was presently by his host’s side in the vehicle. The groom leaving hold of the horse’s head, at a “twit” from our master, after a half-pretence of a rear, the gallant bay shouldered the collar, and started away at the rate of ten miles an hour. Knowing that he would cool down of his own accord, Mr. Jessop just let him go, and after bowling through the Park, they shot past the dilapidated lodges, and got upon the newly-metalled Fillingdale road. The velocity gradually subsided, and quartering, and easing, and picking the way became the order of the day. So they proceeded, jolting and laughing, overtaking horsemen presenting various indications of the chase, one with spurs to his leather-leggings, another with a fine Malacca cane whip-stick in his hand, a third with an entire whip ; then a man in mufti all but a hunting-cap, and presently the knowing, well-dressed grooms, jogging on by ones, by twos, and by threes. All touched or took off their hats to our master as he passed.

The bridge stands obliquely over the broad impetuous Wheetlade, presenting a pleasing feature from whichever end it is approached. Belonging to two counties, the surveyors of each exercise their ingenuity in making their respective ends as different as possible, the arches of one being of thirty, the other of fifty feet chord ; while the wall and parapet of one is of coped rubble, and the other has an iron-railing fixed upon an indifferent ashlar one, to prevent drunken farmers and others shooting over the acute angle into the brawling river below. The bridge itself is on a liberal incline ; and of course there is a toll-bar at the low end, presenting a substantial barrier to runaway horses, and causing many an objurcation from travellers on wheels, who expect to enjoy the benefit of the descent.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Nothing annoys people so much as having to pull up to pay when they are cheating their horses into a belief that they have got nothing behind them.

Branforth bridge was not a very favourite meet for fox-hunters, the general report of a day's sport from thence being, "We ran up the banks and down the banks;" but as the foxes liked the banks it was necessary to disturb them occasionally and drive them out into more popular quarters. Still it was a favourite place for the rising generation, and just at the season of the year when the schools had returned their valuable charges to their homes, it was sure, on a fine day like the present, to draw a considerable number.

Although Mr. Jovey Jessop did not, as we said before, affect lady-foxhunters, he was kind and encouraging to boys, who, besides placing under the particular care of his Jug, he always charged his servants to keep an eye upon, and to ride by such safe ways as would show them the most of a run. So he kept up his popularity with the Mammas who brought their smiling-faced boys on their ponies and in their pretty basket-carriages, and confided them to his care, in the full confidence of getting them safe back again.

"Here we are now!" exclaimed Mr. Jovey Jessop, as the brow of Highford Hill brought them full above the circling river, with its well-wooded banks, marking its meandering course through the country. "Here we are!" repeated he, taking out his watch, and showing Mr. Bunting that it was seven minutes within time.

Two or three red coats, and two or three black coats, dotted the line, the wearers working their horses in the careful sort of way that denotes a ride on, but there was little to indicate a popular gathering.

"Well, but where are the hounds?" asked Mr. Bunting, thinking there was a great falling off in the field.

"The hounds are in the quarry," replied Mr. Jessop, and easing out his horse, he drove rapidly down the hill; but, instead of crossing the bridge, he turned short to the right, and trotting up a narrow lane, entered a spacious whinstone

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

quarry, that looked as if it could supply all the world with stone. Ow, wow, wow, went the joyful hounds, up went the hats and caps, smiles and greetings burst from all quarters. The large sheltered area of the quarry was alive with hounds, and horses, and carriages, and ponies—black, white, dun, roan, pie-bald, skew-bald—all the captivating colours, in fact. There was Mrs. Lob, with her large lustrous dark eyes fixed on her son, now sitting sideways on his skew-bald, whom she commends to the "*very great care*" of Mr. Jessop, begging that he will not let him ride over any five-barred gates, or dangerous places; there is Mrs. Honeybrook, sitting in her clothes-basket in the midst of her bevy of beauties, equally energetic with regard to Albert Arthur, while Mrs. Eglantine begs that Mr. Jessop will see to sweet William, who is out with the hounds for the first time in his life. To all of whose injunctions, and to those of several others, Mr. Jessop replies that he will make a point of attending, and will place the boys under the care of Mr. Boyston as soon as ever he comes up. And scarcely are the words out of his mouth ere our red-hot friend is borne into the midst of the assemblage by the boring, teeth-grinding Billy Rough'un; and, the usual interchange of civilities or incivilities, such as "Well, Tom!" "Well, Jug!" "Well, old Quart Pot! how goes it?" and so on, over, Mr. Jessop, who has now mounted his horse, and sits in the midst of his hounds, exclaims, "I say, Boyston! here are three hundred and fifty thousand pounds worth of jewels (looking round on the smiling faces as he spoke) committed to your care; now will Mark and you take and ride them so as to show them as much of the run as you can, and keep them out of all scrapes?"

To which the Jug, who is a kindly-disposed man, and takes up with children as though he had some of his own, replies, "I will," whereupon Mrs. Lob and all the Mammias open upon him, each urging the claims of her innocent to extra care and protection, in the midst of which Mr. Jovey Jessop having moved first his hat to the ladies, then moves his hounds out of the quarry.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

A DAY FOR THE JUVENILES.



AS usual, the departure of the hounds operated like the bursting of a pent-up cataract ; there was a general rush and hurry after them. First went the keen fustian and smock-frocked countrymen with their staffs, and their poles ; then the anxious few-days-a-season-men, desirous of seeing as much as they could ; next the easy-going regulars who despised the banks and were only out because it was a fine day, followed by a few second horsemen and the homeward bound grooms. Mr. Boyston was presently left alone in the quarry with the youngsters and their Mammas. Then there was a fresh appeal to his sympathies on behalf of Albert Arthur, sweet William, and others, each Mamma declaring she would be so much obliged to Mr. Boyston if he would look after her boy. Oh, she would be so much obliged !

Billy Rough'un, not being a horse that liked being left behind, very soon began fidgiting and turning tail to get after the hounds, so Mr. Boyston having assured the ladies that they might rest perfectly satisfied of the safety of their darlings, marshalled his forces as quickly as possible, saying, "Now, boys ! follow me, and whatever you do keep clear of the horses, for they often kick ponies when they wouldn't kick one another." So saying, he took off his hat to the ladies, and led the way out of the quarry, followed by the miniature field, the rear being brought up by some very sedate-looking family servants with large stomachs, large whips, and a great many

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

large crest-buttons on their parti-coloured coats. Then the ponies, like their riders, began showing which had a turn for the chase and which not, some ambling and curveting to get on, others plodding carelessly along, as though there was nothing particular astir.

It is strange how hunting runs in families, some boys taking to it quite naturally, others never having the slightest idea of anything of the sort. There is young Lob, for instance, so lively and gay, sitting quite at his ease, though his skewbald pony is excited and keen, while Master Bowderoukins (nephew of our esteemed friend) has called in the aid of his roundabout red-vested man to see if he can't make his old brown pony go quieter, though it has no more life in it than a cow. Even little Eglantine, who is two years younger, and has never been out before, laughs at Bowderoukins, and asks if he is tired already. Joe Walker, who has been out hunting four times, and is quite an old sportsman, holloas out, "Never say die!" as flourishing his right arm he trots past Bowderoukins, now busy eating a bun.

Mr. Boyston, meanwhile, looks them all over, thinking which will make sportsmen and which not.

"And what do you call your pony?" asks he of Lob, as the keen little animal darts up along side the great striding Billy Rough'un.

"Atalanta," replies Lob, swinging along quite at his ease.

"Rather fresh, isn't it?" asks Mr. Boyston, eyeing its impetuosity.

"I'll soon cure him of that," replies Lob, patting its arched neck—"wait till I get it upon the grass."

"And what do you call your pony?" asks Mr. Boyston of little Honeybrook, as the latter on his white now draws up on Mr. Boyston's left.

"Lily of the Valley," replies the boy, pleased with the notice of the red-coat.

"Lily of the Valley," repeats Mr. Boyston—"Lily of the Valley—a very pretty name, and a very pretty pony too. Mind," added he, addressing himself conjointly to his

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

companions—"mind you keep out of the crowd, and don't let your ponies touch the horses, and tell the other boys to do the same."

"I will," says Lob.

"And whatever you do, keep clear of the hounds—Mr. Jessop wouldn't lose one of those dogs if it was ever so."

"I will," says Lob, now turning his pony off the road for a probationary gallop up the grass siding. Away went Lob, followed by Honeybrook, Walker, and two or three others.

"Come on! come on!" cries Mr. Boyston, looking back, and waving his arm to little Bowderoukins, and others in the rear, to advance.

"Get on, Master Charles! get on, Master George!" urge the attendant servants, and forthwith there is extra exertion of elbows and legs, and the party press up towards the safe pilot.

"*Hold hard!*" now holloas Mr. Boyston to those in advance, and forthwith Lob and his tail pull up, and turning their ponies, take a return gallop towards him.

"*G-e-ntly!*" cries Mr. Boyston, holding up his hand as they advance—"g-e-ntly!" repeats he, as the hurrying boys try to outstrip one another. After shooting past a few paces, the racing-party pull up, and wheeling round, rejoin their companions, when the juvenile party is again complete.

Meanwhile Mr. Jessop, having jogged on with the hounds, is now approaching the end of the little spinney which runs down into the banks. It is a nice warm sheltered place, with a variety of comfortable ambush, which our master always makes safe before drawing the wood. Hopping over a low fence, his gallant chestnut horse, Star of the West, applies himself vigorously to the steep ascent as though he liked the exertion of climbing. Arrived at the top, the hounds dash eagerly into cover, dividing and spreading like a rocket. The field follow in long-drawn file, but Mr. Boyston, recollecting that there is an awkward bottom to cross, halts his little party, to the infinite mortification of Lob, who does not like leaving the hounds.



The Guy and his friends in the field

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"This way, boys," cries Mr. Boyston, turning Billy Rough'un's head in quite a contrary direction to what the hounds are going—"this way, boys," and passing through a well-established gap, he rides them along Leawood Green, while the occasional cheer of the huntsman becomes fainter and fainter.

"But what shall we do if they find?" now asks Lob, anxiously, trotting up alongside of his leader.

"Oh, I'll soon catch them up," replies Mr. Boyston, jogging on.

Lob doesn't like it, and thinks they had much better stick to the hounds. That, however, he keeps to himself.

Mr. Boyston jogs on briskly, and presently making a short turn to the left, after pursuing the intricacies of a very devious cattle-track through some much mutilated brushwood, he suddenly pulled up on Pebble Ridge Hill with the panorama of the advancing pack coming down upon them.

"Here we are!" cried he, pointing them out to his party. Mr. Jessop's "*yoicks* wind him! *yoicks* push him up!" sounding most musically. So the steady hounds come sniffing here and there and everywhere for the scent, regardless alike of scuttling rabbits and bouncing hares. Lob's eyes sparkle with pleasure, but little Bowderoukins dives into his overcoat-pocket and fishes up a currant-bun, with which he commences regaling himself. Still the cry is "*yoicks* wind him! *yoicks* push him up!" varied with an occasional crack, which startles the wood-pigeons and scares an occasional pheasant. And now the steady drawing hounds are parallel with our juvenile party, and the sloping spinny inclines more determinedly to the river.

"Follow me, boys!" cries Mr. Boyston, again turning tail, and cutting away through a rickety old gate on the left, he strikes down a very indifferent road, which, after two or three tortuous windings, brings him upon the alluvial soil of the fields next the river, just as Conqueror, Traveller, Whimsey, and Whipster round the expanding spinny, and enter upon the well-wooded banks above.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"Now you'll see everything," says Mr. Boyston, pointing to the spreading pack with Mr. Jessop and the body of the field riding on the high side of the cover.

Lob draws rein, and sits with eager eye viewing the gay speckled hounds ranging all over the banks; while Honeybrook and Walker propose a race up the field to the opposite gate, and Bowderoukins perseveres assiduously with his bun. There is pretty good lying, and Mr. Jessop gives his hounds plenty of time, never liking to hear that he has left a fox behind, or that one had slipped away at one end of a cover just as he went out at the other.

And now a loud crack of Horneyman's whip reverberates through the clear atmosphere, awakening the distant echoes; and ere its last notes have expired there is such an outburst of melody from the pack, that the horses are thrown into ecstasies, the ponies caper, and Atalanta darts at the bit as if it was determined to be off.

The fox has been snugly ensconced in an ivy-bush, high up in a crag, and came down with a sweep right before Pillager and Champion, and nothing but astonishment at the unwonted descent prevents them annihilating him. Prompter, and Prowler, and Hotspur, and Spanker, and Sportive, too, get a view, and the whole pack rush from their respective lines to join in the general outcry. Twenty couple of lately leisurely-taking-it hounds are thrown into a state of the most frantic excitement, and rush after the hardy old veteran of a fox in the most headstrong violent way. If he was to dash at an express train, or run into a red-hot furnace, they would follow him. The twang of the horn, and the cheer of the huntsmen are drowned in the melody of the pack, and the glad party push on in the hopes that the fox will run up the banks, but not down the banks, as heretofore has been usual. Mr. Bunting is now quite at home on the Bold Pioneer, who is neither too fresh nor too stale, but just in that comfortably subdued state when a horse yields his wishes to his master, and canters merrily along, snorting, and clearing his pipes as he goes.

"Now, boys! look sharp!" cries Mr. Boyston, hugging the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

teeth-grinding Billy Rough'un, and getting in front of his party ; " follow me," continues he, settling himself in his great saddle, feet well home in the stirrups, and proceeding to pound up the gate-accommodating line of fields running parallel with the swiftly gliding river. The hounds are on their right hand, crashing and racing through the well-wooded banks, making the welkin ring with their melody. All operations are suspended at their coming. The birds in the air, the cattle in the field, the countrymen in the fold, are all diverted from their pursuits. A magical influence pervades the air, heads are up and eyes are straining to the utmost to get a view of the fugitive.

Mr. Jessop shoots a-head in the stealing sort of way that so soon leaves a lagger in the lurch, and just gains the brow of Millerton Hill as the fox comes pacing up the green valley leading from the banks to Summercourt Dale, with two crows and a magpie hovering and wheeling on his line.

Our master claps spurs to the gallant Star of the West, and dropping his whip-thong as he goes, meets the fox full in the face at the accustomed turn by which he generally seeks to regain the banks, and with a tremendous crack and a "*hoop !*" sends him sailing away on to Farmanby Common, and so up to Rawdon Hill, and away towards Finglemoor Edge. This dexterous feat accomplished, a second or two bring up the racing hounds, Fugleman and Firebrand racing for the lead—every hound throwing his tongue—and all in a fine widening phalanx. Away they race, with a breast-high scent. And now two distinct parties emerge from the banks, the one led by Horneyman, comprising the élite of the red coats ; the other by the Jug, who being on the low side of the wood has lee-way to recover, and comes tearing up a roughly stoned lane, spattering his little followers with the mud and *débris* of the surface as he goes.

" Now, boys, follow me !" exclaims he, standing in his stirrups and looking round on the party, as on rising the banks he sees the hounds are racing due north ; adding, " and whatever you do, don't cross or touch other horses, for there are tailors who seek to conceal their incompetence by abusing

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

boys." So saying, he again settled himself in his saddle, and went bucketing away, with the little ponies after him, in the extraordinary sort of way these little animals keep up with a horse. Thus he went hitting and holding and grinning and watching, running his mind's eye through all the familiar gaps and gates and nicks of the line.

"Hold hard!" now cries he, as Lob, who is a little in advance, puts Atalanta at a broken down fence over which the rest of the field have passed. "Hold hard!" cries he, turning short to the left, and throwing open the first of a series of gates leading up to Shillingham farm on the hill. Then seeing that Bowderoukins's Robin-red-breast has caught the gate for his young master, the Jug again sets sail, with Lob by his side, who asks him anxiously, "Why they don't keep with the hounds?"

"I'll show you," says the Jug, rather posed with the question. "I'll show you," says he; and after clattering along the field road and swinging open several more convenient gates, he at length passes right through farmer Sweetlands stack-yard, and presents his followers with a fresh smiling landscape, just as Sweetland's cur, having chased the fox, has brought the hounds to a stand-still on a large rough fallow two fields below the comfortable well-stocked homestead.

"There!" said the Jug, pointing triumphantly to the hounds; "there," said he, "you have them without risking your neck over the hedges and ditches."

"Well, but I like leaping," says Lob, stealing on and making for the hounds instead of waiting with the Jug to see which way they will go next. Little Albert Arthur follows Lob's example, but sweet William, Bowderoukins, and the rest remain with our deputy master, Mr. Boyston. Mark, Mr. Jovey Jessop's second horseman, then detaches himself from the miscellaneous group of servants, and trots gently on with an eye on the adventurous youths. Lob pulls up at a respectful distance from the field, and eyes Mr. Jessop's proceedings with his hounds, now casting them, now letting them alone. So he holds them round the south side of the large fallow—every hound working his best, but unable to recover the scent. At

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

length Trueman after a precautionary whimper drops his stern with a vigorous proclamation, and dashes at the neighbouring hedgerow, as if he expected to find the fox in the middle of it. Life is again infused into the lately drooping pack, and impetuosity supplies the place of care. Horses and riders catch the enthusiasm, and there is a complete electrification of the whole. The hounds dash at the hedgerow, which bends and breaks with their weight. Mr. Jessop follows close on the tail ones, clearing the wattled fence and yawning ditch in his stride. Horneyman does the same, the next man breaks the witherings, the third displaces some cut and laid growers while the fourth brushes all away together, and nearly reposes, after a flounder, in the broad black ditch beyond. His horse having at length extricated his hind legs and re-established himself on terra firma, to the great satisfaction of his rider, again sets sail, when the dread place has to be encountered by the remanets, many of whom go w-h-o-a-ing and craneing, wishing themselves well over. That desirable feat accomplished by the next in rotation, he looks back and cries, "There's nothing to be afraid of!" so the succeeding man approaches it with increasing confidence, his young grey horse, however, throwing such an arch as apparently contradicts the assertion. Still, it is no time for turning; every man hurries his neighbour, either for the purpose of getting over or putting an end to his own fears.

"Now, Tomkins!" "Now, Jenkins!" "Now, Jones!" So they go at it, each man according to his own fashion; some straight, some sideways, some rushing, some creeping, some blundering clumsily. Now comes Lob, closely followed by little Arthur Honeybrook; and Lob, running his pony well at the place, comes over with a bucking bound that looks as if he was clearing a hedge instead of a ditch. Lily of the Valley then creeps down the ditch and up again; and Lob, seeing Arthur well landed, swerves to the left, and giving his pony its head up the grass, spurts past all the old drab-coated farmers and people, closely followed by the white. So they get to the gate at the tail of the red-coats. Grass succeeds grass, and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

a small transparent hedge dividing the next enclosures, the sportsmen spread in the independent sort of way peculiar to safety, each man taking the young fence in his line, and Lob flying over it like the rest of the field.

"Well done, young 'un!" cries Mr. Jovey Jessop, snatching a hasty backward glimpse from his now racing hounds. "Well done, young 'un!" repeats he, as Albert Arthur, with a less leap than Lob's, lands on the right side of the hedge too. "Where's Mr. Boyston?" cries Mr. Jessop, looking further back for the "magister curser" of his hunt. "Where's Mr. Boyston?" And echo answers, where? A similar return is made to an inquiry after the boy with the bun.

Our friends are now on Cherrytree Hill, with the hounds sweeping round its base, and a shepherd holding up his hat in the distance to denote the line of the fox. The field are inside the semicircle, with a full view of the contesting energies of the pack; the rich-coloured Hotspur now leading, now Famous, now Firebrand, now Pillager, the pace being too great for much music. So they sweep over the perennially green meadows up to the point indicated by the countryman. He has not headed him. On the contrary, being what they call a "slee chap," he dropped down into the ditch, when by the running of the sheep he saw the fox was coming, and had an uncommonly good stare as he passed through a meuse a little below where he was hid. He is a'most sure he's the varra fox that stole their turkeys i' the spring.

Countrymen always declare that a fox is dead beat, but upon the present occasion the shepherd was not far wrong in his assertion, for the fox having eat a very liberal late supper, is in no condition to compete with Mr. Jovey Jessop's fleet stout-running hounds. The scent too is better than is convenient under the circumstances; and altogether, what with surprise at being whipped so unceremoniously out of his ivy-mantled tower, confusion at being stared full in the face by Mr. Jessop and driven from his point, together with not being able to make up his mind whether to shape his course for Chippendale Woods or the craigs at Raven's Hill, he doesn't exactly know



"WELL DONE, YOUNG 'UN!"

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

what to do. The cry of the hounds, and the cheer of the hunters, however, keep him going, for he feels it would never do to let them come up with him. So he travels on, trusting to beating them again as he has beat them twice before. Third time, however, they say, is catching time, and it is destined to be so on the present occasion. Steering an intermediate course between the craigs and the woods, he gets into a more populous neighbourhood—a country dotted with hamlets and small farm-houses, with their concomitant curs and other incumbrances. The further he advances the more he gets holloaed and viewed, until the whole country seems raised against him. The roads, too, run conveniently, and the clatter of the horses and the noise of the macadamites makes confusion worse confounded.

The Jug and Billy Rough'un are both in a high state of excitement, the Jug at having laid out of his ground by riding for Chippendale Woods, Billy Rough'un at being kept on the hard road when he wants to be racing in the fields alongside the musical hounds. The Jug has reduced the number of his small friends and increased that of his large ones; Bowderoukins's pony having peremptorily refused to risk its shins by passing over a tumble-down wall, while Lishman and Brisket of Pittville have turned up from nobody knows where—the "George and Dragon" at Crossfield, perhaps—and are long trotting in the loose stick-out-leg sort of way peculiar to butchers and drovers.

The Jug is red-hot; his face is as red as his coat. Billy Rough'un has bumped and shook him till he feels like a great dish of calves' feet jelly. What with the excitement of riding the wrong way, and then making up his lost ground, the excitement of being bullied for doing so, the excitement of looking after the youngsters, and the excitement of keeping Billy Rough'un in something like moderate subjection, the poor Jug is nearly overpowered. Added to this, he doesn't know but that young Lob and Arthur may have come to grief, for which he will be sure to get the blame. Pretty Mrs. Lob will never forgive him. Great is the relief to his mind as, on rising Dickering Hill, he sees the two boys careering away, near enough to the hounds, but yet clear of the crowd. The fox

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

begins to run short, but the hounds turn as short as he does, and the Jug knows by experience that there will soon be an end of the same. So seeing a promising course of gates with a double fence in the distance, he boldly forsakes the road, resolved to be up at the end. His gallant tail follow suit, and there is presently a reunion of the field.

“Hillo, Green!” “Holloa, Brown!” “What, Smith! are you there?” proceed from the fieldites, who look at the roadsters much in the manner of hounds when a straggler comes up.

Mr. Bunting, who has been most comfortably carried by the Bold Pioneer, asks Mr. Boyston where he has been ?

“Busy with the youngsters, busy with the youngsters,” replies the Jug, leading his little troop outside the now halting horseman. The fox is now running so short, and the enclosures are so queer and cramped, that with a failing scent, it requires all Mr. Jovey Jessop’s skill—science, the fine writers call it—to keep the hounds on the line of the scent. The fox has evidently no idea which way he is going, running up Tommy Hoggin’s potato field, down Mrs. Mason’s pasture, and back over through farmer Fothergill’s turnips. He has now lain down among the turnips, but mistrusting their flaccid security, he incautiously jumps up just as the hounds enter the field, when a shrill holloa gets them a view, and away they race, Pillager and the fox at length rolling over together down the slope of the adjoining pasture. Firebrand, Absolute, and General complete the worry; and in an instant the rest of the pack are rumblety, tumblety, head-over-heels, with the fox in the middle!

Mr. Jessop jumping off his horse is presently in the midst of them, and stooping and extricating the fox from their fangs, holds up as fine an old dog one as ever was seen. Then the frantic pack jump and bay at our master, Victory, with a surprising spring, seizing the fox by the brush, and hanging on despite Mr. Jessop’s efforts to disengage him. Horneyman, who is close at hand, gives his horse to a hind, and dashing up on foot, clears a ring round his master, who, dropping the fox on the greensward, Victory lets go his hold, and slinks away to

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

his companions around. Then, after a brief inspection and guess at the fox's age, out comes the old buck-handled knife, with which Horneyman performs the last obsequies of the chase, whipping off his fine head, which he lays on the ground, and handing the brush and pads, as he kneels, to our master.

The mutilated remains Horneyman then holds up on high, when the wrath of the pack being excited by the hoops and holloas of the horseman, the carcass is thrown in mid air, and descending, is caught by a myriad of mouths.

Worry, worry, worry, rush, crush, growl, snarl, scramble, is then the order of the day.

"Keep away your horses!" then cries Mr. Jessop, fearing for his hounds, when Resolute and Dexterous giving a unanimous pull, the carcass rolls down hill, and the danger is over.

"Now, where are the youngsters?" exclaims Mr. Jessop, advancing with his whip under his arm, and the proud trophies in his hand—"Where's Lob?" cries he, looking about for the rider of the skew-bald.

"Here!" cries the Jug, who has now got his little party marshalled around him.

"Well, now, Lob, here's the brush for you, my fine lad," says Mr. Jessop, advancing towards him; "but stop," added he, "we must blood you first." So saying, Mr. Jessop made Lob a very fine moustache and imperial with the blood of the fox.

"Now then," said he, fastening the brush into Lob's bridle, "you tell your Mamma that you rode like a man." Then advancing to little Honeybrook, he smeared his face too, and giving him a pad, says he may tell his Mamma the same; after which Mr. Jovey Jessop handed the rest of the pads to his Jug to distribute as he chose.

The hounds meanwhile having finished their wrangling repast, and the whip fastened the fox's head into the couples, people begin to look at their watches, those who have had enough inquiring their ways home, others asking Mr. Jessop what he will draw next. Chippendale Woods being the never-failing

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

resort, the word is given for them, which causes a still further dispersion of the field, one man dropping off at one lane end, another at another, till the Jug, our hero, and our master are the only red coats that remain. The deep-holding rides—enough to pull a horse's legs off—are too good a chance for Mr. Boyston to lose for taming Billy Rough'un, otherwise he would have preferred drawing Mr. Walker's or Mr. Eglantine's on his way home for a luncheon. As it is he lays the foundation for a future visit by sending his compliments, and desiring the boys to tell their Mammias that he will look in upon them the first time he is passing. He then, consigning them to the servants, takes a good holding grip of Billy Rough'un, as much as to say, now that we are clear of all care, I'll see whether you or I shall be master. And what with a slack rein, and an occasional touch of the spur, at the end of twenty minutes after they found he certainly was a very different Billy Rough'un to what he was during the first run, and the Jug had the satisfaction of bringing him home very tame. He then added 120*l.* to his price, 140*l.* being what he considered him worth to anyone who could ride him. And not being disposed to keep more horses than he wanted, he rocked himself asleep at night thinking whom he would suit.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXXV.

MR. ARCHEY ELLENGER'S DINNER.



OUR hero, Mr. Bunting, did not prosecute the chase in Chippendale Woods. True, he went there, but it was only for the purpose of slipping away without the disagreeable leave-taking that we all dislike so. Greetings are pleasant, but adieus are melancholy. So when Mr. Jovey Jessop began yoicking and cheering his hounds on the high side of the extensive wood, Mr. Bunting struck up the middle ride, and, by aid of certain land-marks he had previously established, succeeded in finding his way into the Rookery lane, from whence he presently diverged upon the Buckworth and Badger field road. He then, by dint of copious inquiries and sundry deviations that he would have avoided if piloted by the Jug, came upon the more familiar landscape surrounding Appleton Hall. The house gained, he surrendered his horse, and committed himself to the care of the St. Leger pill-box on his return to Lord Cornwallis. The day was Saturday, and he was engaged to dine with Mr. Archey Ellenger on the following one.

Sunday was a *dies non* at Appleton Hall, both in the eating, drinking, and dressing way. There were neither sea-side coats nor tweeds, nor deer-stalker hats, nor turbans with tassels, nor any of the complications of modern ingenuity to be seen ; but, on the contrary, very sedate Sunday clothes of the plain orthodox order. The Jug always inaugurated a pair of clean nankins, in which, regardless of the weather, with a large Boyston Park prayer-book, wrapped up in a red cotton kerchief,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

he stumped perseveringly to church, accompanied by Mr. Jessop and such of the servants as liked his leading. The clergyman dined at the Hall, and there was a sermon for the establishment and neighbourhood in the evening. So Mr. Jessop commenced the week well, and prospered in the course of it, as he deserved to do. But we must follow our friend Mr. Bunting to his uncomfortable quarters at Burton St. Leger.

"Oh, I shall not dine at home to-day," exclaimed our hero to Mrs. Muldoon, as she appeared after breakfast at the door of his sitting-room to know what he would like to have for dinner, just as if he could have anything he called for. "I shall not dine at home to-day," repeated he, wishing to get rid of her, for he had stuck fast in the middle of a sonnet to Miss Rosa's ringlets, which he now thought he could hit off if she would go away.

"Oh, indeed," replied Mrs. Muldoon, looking somewhat disconcerted, adding, "I'd got a goose, thinking you might like a little change."

"Had you," replied Mr. Bunting, "had you; well, it will do for another day—it will do for another day;" adding, "I'm going to dine with Mr. Archey Ellenger to-day."

"Indeed!" mused Mrs. Muldoon, who, having now mastered the whole Privett Grove mystery, thought he might be going there.

"I shall want a conveyance of some sort!" exclaimed our friend, as she was about to withdraw; "I shall want a conveyance of some sort—I s'pose I can have the thing I had yesterday?"

"Well, sir, I dare say you can," replied Mrs. Muldoon, who had a convenient arrangement with the owner. "I'll send along and see." She then withdrew, and desired sore-eyed Sam to slip up and see if they could have Dr. Catcheyside's carriage, which, as usual, was much at Mrs. Muldoon's service.

Our hero, however, being still unable to extricate the muse, after a series of stumbles and flounders, at length shut up his desk, deciding that ringlets did not become Rosa, and presently obeyed the summons of the bells to church. In the afternoon

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

he took a stroll about the place, met pretty Rebecca Mary dressed like a duchess, and sore-eyed Sam in all the glaring impotence of satin. There is nothing like a sloven for getting up smart on a Sunday. Mr. Bunting then had a look at his good-for-nothing horses, and wondered what he should do with them at the end. And, having exhausted the resources of the place, as the shades of evening drew on, he retired to his room where Rebecca Mary, having put off her fine beaded bonnet and laid aside her parasol, was deranging her hoops by making up the white-ash burning fire.

Just as our friend was thinking of retiring to his bed-room to put on a dress-coat and vest and a pair of japanned Wellington boots with red morocco legs, the roll of a carriage was heard driving rapidly up to the inn door, which Mr. Bunting would have thought was coming for him, had not a voice immediately been heard exclaiming, "Is Mr. Bunting gone? Is Mr. Bunting gone?"

"No, sir," replied sore-eyed Sam, who had been attracted to the archway by the sound of the wheels; "but I expect Dr. Catcheyside's carriage coming for him every minute."

"Oh, that's all right!" exclaimed the voice, cheerfully, "that's all right!" adding, "then stand by my horse while I slip upstairs;" so saying, the speaker alighted and proceeded to grope his way towards an eight-in-the-pound mould-candle flickering in a glass cracked lantern placed against the wall at the bottom of the stairs.

"Vot name shall I enounce?" asked Monsieur Bonville of the stranger, Monsieur, too, having been attracted to the stairs by the sound of the wheels.

"Mr. Ellenger—Mr. Archibald Ellenger," replied the arriver, making the most of his name.

"Ellenger, Ellenger, why that's the man I'm going to dine with," muttered Mr. Bunting, as the familiar sound came up the little staircase leading to his room.

Mr. Ellenger then ran a dead heat with his name. "Ah, my dear fellow!" exclaimed he, tripping gaily into the apartment, seizing Mr. Bunting's right hand with both his, and pressing it

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

fervently. "Ah, my dear fellow! I'm so glad I've got in time to stop you—I'm so glad I've got in time to stop you; I've had a desperate misfortune at home—I've had a desperate misfortune at home. My cook's got so scandalously drunk that she is utterly incompetent—put the cod-fish on to the spit, and wanted to boil the goose with lobster sauce!"

"What fun!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, not sorry to be off the engagement.

"Fun to her, but death to us," rejoined Mr. Ellenger, releasing Mr. Bunting's hand. "I'd got the nicest little dinner and the nicest little party that ever were arranged; and then the cruel catamaran goes and spoils all by her confounded intemperance."

"Well, better luck next time," replied Mr. Bunting, soothingly; "better luck next time."

"Ah, that's very kind of you," rejoined Mr. Ellenger, again seizing Mr. Bunting's hand and pressing it warmly; "that's very kind of you, but I assure you I feel the disappointment exceedingly."

"Misfortunes will happen in the best regulated families—misfortunes will happen in the best regulated families," rejoined Mr. Bunting.

"So they will," said Mr. Ellenger, "so they will; and we must just make the best of it," adding adroitly, "there's nothing like a lady for keeping matters right. I wouldn't have cared so much if it had been any day but Sunday," observed Mr. Ellenger; "only when a man loses his Sunday dinner, he has no place to fall back upon."

"Oh, yes, I have," rejoined our hero, "I've a goose in the house."

"Goose in the house! have you," exclaimed Mr. Ellenger, brightening up; "goose in the house! well, that's a good hearing."

"At least, there was," observed Mr. Bunting, "and I've not smelt its disappearance. A goose, you know, leaves a strong scent."

"So it does," said Mr. Ellenger, "so it does; and, by the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

way, I'll tell you what," continued he, as if a bright thought had just struck him, "I'll tell you what, I'll just go down stairs and see if it is in existence still, and tell them to put it down, and I will dine with you, and you shall dine with me some other day."

"Do," replied Mr. Bunting, rather chagrined at the proposal.

"Dine as soon as it is ready, I suppose?" asked Mr. Ellenger.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Bunting, "I shall be ready when it is."

"That's a bargain!" exclaimed our brisk old friend, wheeling about and leaving the room. He then proceeded down stairs, making straight for the street, where sore-eyed Sam stood in charge of the horse. "Sam," said he, "put up that horse; give him two feeds of corn and hay, and have him ready to put to about nine o'clock; but don't put him to till I tell you."

"Yes, sir," replied Sam, surprised at the magnificence of the order, for Archey was generally a pail of water, and "I'll remember you next time" man.

The horse thus disposed of, Mr. Ellenger next made for the bar, to see what he could do for himself. "Ah, Matty!" exclaimed he, going gaily into the little room just as he had done to Mr. Bunting; "ah, Matty! how goes it?" advancing up to the sot as he sat, with his glass and his pipe, by the fire.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Muldoon, not recognising Archey in his dark non-hunting dress.

"Who is it?" repeated Archey, "why, *me* to be sure. Mr. Ellenger!"

"Ellenger—Ellenger," growled Muldoon, knocking the ashes out of his pipe on the floor. "Ellenger—Ellenger," repeated he, looking intently at his own toes for an idea, "why, you owe me three and ninepence," said he, blinking intently at Archey.

"No, I don't," replied Mr. Ellenger.

"Yes, you do," asserted Matty, confidently.

"How do you make it out?" demanded Mr. Ellenger.

"Make it out," replied Matty, "make it out—the missis makes it out; but I know you do."

"Hut, fiddle, man; you're drunk, man," replied Mr. Ellenger, turning carelessly away.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"Drunk!" retorted Matty, "drunk! there's not a soberer respectabler man in Her Majesty's domin—minions than (hiccup) I. What do you (hiccup) mean by saying I'm (hiccup)?" demanded he, blinking and shaking his head angrily at our fox-hunter.

"What's the matter, now?" asked fat Mrs. Muldoon, bustling in with her keys.

"Oh, nothing," replied Archey; "nothing, only your good man's made a mistake. Tell me," continued he, drawing Mrs. Muldoon aside, "what can Mr. Bunting and I have for dinner?"

"Mr. Bunting is going to dine out," observed Mrs. Muldoon.

"No, he was going to dine with me," replied Mr. Ellenger, "but I have had a misfortune in my kitchen—cook taken ill—and so I am going to take a little dinner with him here instead."

"Oh, indeed," replied Mrs. Muldoon, thinking matters over. "Well, sir, what would you like to have?"

"What have you got?" asked Archey, taking a short cut to the point; adding, "not mutton-chops, beef-steaks—beef-steaks, mutton-chops, mind."

"Well, there's a goose," said Mrs. Muldoon, complacently.

"Goose! is there?" exclaimed Archey, adding, "well, that will do. No fish, I suppose?"

"Fish," said Mrs. Muldoon, "fish; yes, there are some haddocks."

"Capital!" rejoined Archey; "a couple of haddocks—or say three—egg sauce, you know: and now about sweets—what have you got in the way of sweets?"

"What would you like?" asked Mrs. Muldoon, in the usual provoking style of inn answers.

"Oh, like! I should like an *omelette au confiture*, or some little delicacy of that sort; but what I am likely to get is the thing."

"Well, sir, would you like a damson tart, or an apple pudding?"

"Damson tart, apple pudding?" replied Archey; "well, apple pudding's very good with goose. Yes, we'll have an apple pudding. And now about wine—what wine have you?"

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"We have all sorts of wine," replied Mrs. Muldoon ; "port, sherry, Madeira, cowslip, tent, grape, and elder."

"Bother your grape and elder !" retorted Archey ; "have you any champagne ?"

"Well, yes, we just have one bottle," replied Mrs. Muldoon ; "one bottle that we kept for old Lord Lushborough, who used to sleep here on his way up and down."

"Lord Lushborough ! Lord Lushborough's been dead these twenty years !" exclaimed Archey.

"Well, not so long as that," rejoined Mrs. Muldoon ; "it was shortly after the opening of the railway, which ruined our calling, and we have never been asked for a bottle since."

"Ah, well, it will be good for nothing ; but, however, you may send it up, and if it's drinkable we'll drink it, if not you'll get it back." So saying, and after urging Mrs. Muldoon to activity, Mr. Ellenger retired, followed by a heavy growl from Matty about the three and ninepence he owed him. Having reported to Mr. Bunting what he had done, Mr. Ellenger then excused himself for half an hour while he went to visit his good friend Mr. Buckwheat, and see if he could arrange a billet with him for some future occasion. The half-hour was somehow protracted into an hour ; and when Archey came blundering down the street in the dark, the smell of the goose would have arrested his progress even if the economical candle had not been flickering an equivocal light in the archway. Mr. Ellenger stopped like a pointer crossing a scent, and, turning short in, regaled his olfactory nerves with the smell as he proceeded leisurely up stairs to Mr. Bunting's apartment. Here he found our friend making another attempt at the impracticable sonnet, which he whipped away with his rhyming dictionary into his desk. Mr. Ellenger then hung up his hat and proceeded to make himself at home. He was so sorry about the cook—nasty drunken creature—but he would give her up in the morning. However, things might have been worse if they could not have got any dinner ; and while they were discussing the matter, the increased clatter of plates below was followed by the bump of a tray against the turn of the staircase, and Bonville presently

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

appeared with the fish. The haddocks were good, the goose was good, and though the champagne was dead and ropy, the sherry was passable, and so was the port. Mr. Ellenger did ample justice to all. The leathery cheese being at length removed, the cloth drawn, and some red hard-featured apples and lemon-coloured oranges placed on the table, Monsieur Bonville having arranged the composites, presently withdrew, shutting our friends up for a confab.

Mr. Ellenger was one of those accommodating gentlemen who will tell people anything they see they want told. Of course he knew all about our friend and Miss Rosa, and after a cursory glance at some of the other beauties—the Springfields, the Beauchamps, the Bedfords—he turned the conversation upon her. Like Mrs. Tom Trattles, he knew, or professed to know, everything—how much there was in the funds, how much in railways, how much in canal shares. Altogether he made out a very encouraging report. He only hoped Miss Rosa would marry some producible person, and not that young cub of a banker. Archey did not like “sivin and four,” who had hitherto successfully resisted all attempts on his larder. He had never been able to get even as much as a water-biscuit out of him.

To Mr. Bunting’s inquiry if he really thought there was anything between Miss Rosa and young Goldspink, Mr. Ellenger replied, with a shrug of his shoulders, that he really couldn’t say, he only knew he was frequently there; and when a young man went to a house where there was a young lady, of course there was always the usual inference. And Mr. Bunting, not wishing to appear too inquisitive, did not press the inquiry, but tapping the now nearly-emptied port-wine decanter with his dessert-knife, asked Mr. Ellenger if he would take a little more of that, or try what the claret was like? but Mr. Ellenger, having a stout British stomach, little addicted to vinegar, declared for the port; whereupon another bottle, or as much of a bottle as the decanter would hold, was produced, the greater part of which Mr. Ellenger succeeded in placing under his waistcoat. And the moon having at length risen, and Mr.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Ellenger having had tea, coffee, and *chasse*, presently ordered his vehicle ; and after an affectionate leave-taking, and making Mr. Bunting promise faithfully to dine with him " some day," he tucked himself carefully in, and, telling sore-eyed Sam he had no silver, went lilting and tilting away back to Kids Hill, extremely well pleased with the result of his *ruse*. The cook was no more drunk than we are.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

THE TENDER PROP REPEATED.



THOUGH the new bonnet was a sore subject with Mrs. Goldspink, it was rather a useful one for Miss Rosa. It made Mrs. Goldspink nag and talk against Mrs. McDermott and her daughter, and as a natural consequence, made our friend Jasper more keen and determined about the young lady. And as Mr. Bunting was equally ardent there was presently very brisk competition, and much ringing at the Privett Grove door bell. Our friend, the Jug, too dropped in occasionally on his own account; so that altogether there was a very considerable amount of billing and cooing going on at the Grove. This being the fanning up time, people talked very amiably and complacently of the Jug and his property—such an old family—such a nice place; and said he had been quite the saving of Mr. Jessop, who but for his good and virtuous guidance would soon have degenerated into a regular sot. Then as to Admiration Jack and Jasper, the ladies (for it is they alone who dabble in these matters) declared that either was excellent, whichever in fact seemed to be the favourite; so that all seemed to be unanimous, so far as the tongues were concerned. If, however, Mamma and Miss Rosa could have overheard the mirth and ejaculations that burst forth as their dear friends got away from the house, they would not have had much opinion of their sincerity—little flirt—old fool—drunken creature, alluding to Boyston—pity him—pity her—pity them, and so on.

Our friend Mr. Bunting, as we said before, had had much

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

experience in courtship, and though he had undoubtedly been kept in abeyance a good while, yet he was not altogether unwilling to procrastinate the suit, so long as he felt certain of winning at last. Despite Mr. Archey Ellenger's information, and also despite meeting our friend Jasper at the Grove, occasionally, he had no doubt whatever that he himself was to be the happy man, and so treated Jasper with a proper mixture of pity and condescension. The advent of the Jug now, however, rather altered matters, and Mamma thinking Rosa might do well to suit herself with one or other of the gentlemen, gave her the usual opportunities, losing her keys, forgetting her kerchief, or being called away to see new servants, and so on.

Some ladies pretend to get offers without expecting them, and practise all sorts of elegant little airs and graces on the occasion, start and stare as if wholly unable to comprehend what the gentleman means, or declare that they are really so taken by surprise that they must be allowed a little time for reflection—that they have a high opinion of Captain Trophy, Mr. Green, or whoever the suitor may be, but that he had never crossed the fair one's mind in any other light than that of an agreeable companion, thus paying an indirect compliment to their own looks at the expense of their veracity. A man must be very simple who believes such a story.

Though Miss Rosa had not had much experience in the offering way, and that only with our hero, yet her womanly instinct told her to a minute when it was coming, and after flashing a glance at her questioner, she turned aside as if unable to speak her emotion. Mr. Bunting, who had had this style of answer before, and knew how to deal with it, then seized her in his arms, and impressed such a volley of kisses on her coral lips and fair cheeks, as enabled him to present her to Mamma on her return as his own accepted bride. And Mamma equally astonished, was delighted to hear the good news, and after saying all sorts of handsome things on behalf of her daughter, concluded by declaring that she was sure Mr. Bunting would make Rosa an excellent husband, and she wished them all



POPPING THE QUESTION.

PLAIN OR RINGLET'S ?

possible joy and prosperity, whereupon she too kissed her daughter extravagantly. All this unwonted energy and exercise naturally drew forth the tears and the kerchief, and John Thomas happening to come in with the coals in the midst of the sunshiny shower, reported to Miss Perker, the maid, what he had seen ; whereupon Perker immediately jumped to the conclusion that the hero of the Roseberry Rocks sash was to be her future master. And in less than five minutes the news was all over the house, and conveyed to Crop and the groom gardener in the stable. And a great commotion was the consequence—great speculation as to when they would be married, where they would live, what Jasper would say, and whether “Missis” herself was going to change her condition—they thought it looked very like it—but they would soon see.

Save for the triumph and perhaps the sake of appearances among friends, there is very little use in announcing a match—people all know it so well long beforehand. Ladies, however, have always great pleasure in proclaiming them, and Mr. Bunting’s offer was speedily trumpeted throughout the county. The news was variously received by the young and the old. The young were always sure that Mr. Bunting would be the man, while the old shook their heads, and said they’d believe it when they saw it. It wasn’t likely a worldly-minded woman, like Mrs. McDermott, was going to let such an undoubted prize as young Goldspink slip through her fingers. Who was Mr. Bunting ?

Mrs. McDermott was now rather puzzled how to act with regard to her dear friend Mr. Goldspink, whether to let him hear of the engagement from some one else, or to call and inform the banker’s lady herself. On thinking it over, she saw no reason why she should not call herself. There had never anything really serious passed between the Mammas, save a mutual confidence and readiness to leave the young people together. If Jasper did not choose to be on the alert, Rosa was not to miss a chance by waiting for him. Certainly not. He might never have come forward. Dared say Mrs. Goldspink

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

thought they would consider Jasper a catch, but this offer would show that they were not dependent upon him.

So she determined to go herself ; and the brougham, and the invidious bonnet were speedily back at sivin-and-four's door. Mrs. McDermott arrived at a critical time, for Jasper had just heard of Miss Rosa's engagement from his turf friend, Mr. Tailings, and had been upbraiding his mother most roundly for the part she had taken in the matter, declaring he would throw himself off the church steeple, or go to Van Diemen's Land forthwith, if he didn't get Rosa. Mrs. Goldspink was frightened, for Jasper was accustomed to have his own way, and could ill put up with any opposition. Instead, therefore, of following Jasper's furious example, she tried the soothing system, commencing of course by kissing Mrs. McDermott, and then after a sort of half-congratulation proceeded in a round-about way to insinuate (simper) that there was a (cough) time when she might have (hem) hoped to have had the (sneeze) pleasure of calling dear Rosa her (cough) daughter ; but—and then she paused, apparently taken up with something that had got entwined in the silk fringe of her cloak. Mrs. McDermott bobbed and simpered too ; she was sure she had always felt and expressed the greatest regard for dear Jasper as well on account of his own intrinsic worth, as on that of his excellent parents, and nothing would have given her greater (hem) pleasure than cementing their long (cough) intimacy with a match, but—and here, too, she was brought up short, and began feeling for her kerchief. Each then sat sighing for a while, until perhaps emboldened by the success of her approaches, and thinking of Jasper's proposed descent from the steeple, Mrs. Goldspink proceeded to make more inquiries, asked all about Mr. Bunting and his means, whether his Papa was alive, if he had a place of his own, where it was, and finding that there was a good deal yet to ascertain, she said that of course Mrs. McDermott would see that Rosa was properly secured, and she then began to talk of her husband's, old sivin-and-four's, great wealth, Jasper's fine expectations, and the beautiful villa they were building, of which she produced the plans, showing the kitchens, cellars and

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

shoe house, larder, dairy, and everything. Then, after a prolonged sit, dear Mrs. McDermott returned dear Mrs. Goldspink's kiss, and saw her to her carriage, feeling considerably relieved by the result of her visit. And Mrs. Goldspink made such a representation to her son as induced him to postpone as well his aerial flight, as his journey to Van Diemen's Land.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

MAMMA INSTEAD OF MISS



THE same want that we named before—that of some instrument or invention whereby people may be enabled to ascertain the hidden thoughts and feelings of others, again beset our friend Mr. Bunting in his pursuit of the fair and beautiful Miss Rosa. “Dear Mamma,” as he had now begun to call Mrs. McDermott, who had thereto been all smiles and confidence, suddenly changed, and became so pressingly urgent to know all about him and his affairs, that he could not imagine what had happened. The morning after her visit to Mrs. Goldspink, at Mayfield, instead of descending as he expected upon Miss Rosa alone in the drawing-room, he was shown up a step into the parlour, where sat Mamma, hemming a stout Baden-Baden towel, who at once two-fingered him into a very uneasy high-backed low chair, saying, with a keen eye and a somewhat compressed mouth, that she wished to have a few minutes’ conversation with him before he saw Miss Rosa; laying a slight emphasis on the word Miss.

Mr. Bunting of course knew what was coming, and demeaned himself accordingly, taking his seat with the air of a man entering a dentist’s throne. Mrs. McDermott did not begin, as some of his lady confessors had done, by asking about his religious principles, his political opinions, or speaking on any extraneous subject, but after a dry prefatory *hem*, she glanced at the compliment he had paid to her daughter, and the high opinion they both entertained of him, and then proceeded to

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

say that she was sure Mr. Bunting would agree with her, that it was desirable to come to a distinct understanding as soon as possible, for that long engagements were always to be deprecated, and people did talk so that it made her quite nervous and uncomfortable, and in short she should like exceedingly to have the thing settled forthwith. And after a few repetitions she began to pinch the Baden-Baden towel severely, as if in search of fresh ideas.

Mr. Bunting, who during this exordium had been twirling his turban hat, then dropped it on the floor, and clasping his hands, with upturned eyes, proceeded to indulge in the most high-flown panegyrics on the beauty of her daughter, the sweetness of her smile, the perfection of her figure, the elegance of her walk; declaring that her electric eyes had quite penetrated his heart the first moment he had seen her. To all which compliments Mrs. McDermott kept smirking and smiling and pinching the Baden towel, considering how she should get him worked round into the right tack.

"Well, I'm sure Rosa has cause to be proud of your good opinion," at length interposed she; "but courtship and matrimony, you know, are proverbially different, and it won't do to marry smiles and dimples and pretty figures alone; there must be prudence and consideration for the future, and now, you know, is the proper time for making all necessary arrangements."

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Bunting, "undoubtedly; though with the girl of one's heart these matters are of very minor importance." And before Mrs. McDermott could interpose her opinion to the contrary, our poetical friend had broken right away with his favourite quotation:

"With her conversing I forget all time,
All seasons and their change," &c.

going right through to the end of it.

Mrs. McDermott, however, kept the point steadily in her mind, and when he had concluded she looked up from her towel, and drily observed that love in a cottage was very well

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

in theory, but it did not do in practice—that all ladies liked large houses, and concluded by asking him point blank if he hadn't a castle in Scotland.

"Well—ye-as," drawled Mr. Bunting, looking at the tip of his Balmoral boot.

"Rosa would like a castle," observed Mrs. McDermott, drily. "What was it called?"

"Buntingbury Castle," replied our hero.

"Buntingbury Castle, indeed—called after himself?"

"After my grandfather, Admiral Bunting," replied our friend.

"Oh, indeed! a family place, is it?" observed Mrs. McDermott, perking up—Goldspink and Garlandale rather going down.

"Was it large?" asked she.

"Well, no—not large—usual size of a castle, I suppose," replied our hero; (just as if there was ever a usual size for a castle—Little Belvoir and real Belvoir, for instance).

Mrs. McDermott then applied herself assiduously to her Baden-Baden towel, taking some rapid stitches, and an equally rapid retrospect of the Roseberry Rocks anonymous letter. The writer, if she recollected right, couldn't say that Mr. Bunting hadn't a castle—only told her to question him about his castle. Well, she had questioned him about his castle, and he said he had one. What more could she do? She really thought the writer had just wanted to spoil Rosa's chance. And Goldspink and Garlandale sunk still lower in her estimation. Buntingbury Castle on the top of a letter would sound far finer than Garlandale, Garlandale Lodge, or Garlandale Villa, or whatever they decided to call it.

"Well," said Mrs. McDermott, looking up from her work with a smile, "I suppose it will be all right."

"I suppose so," replied Mr. Bunting, who had rather his misgivings about the castle. He could have wished that "dear mamma" had led off with some exposition of what she herself would do than thus throw the onus of the whole arrangement upon him. If she married the Jug, who was evidently after her, there would be very small chance of getting

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

her to give up any part of her life interest in what there was to dear Rosa. Altogether Mr. Bunting was as depressed as Mrs. McDermott was elated. He was tired of the returns made to the castle inquiries, and would gladly have left that property out of the reckoning, or only brought it in incidentally.

Now, if the before-mentioned much-wanted invention or instrument were in existence and use, our hero would have seen his way clearly through his dilemma—would have said at once when John Thomas ushered him up stairs instead of down, “Ah, my dear Mrs. McDermott, I know how it is—I know how it is—Mrs. Goldspink and you have had an imparlance, and as I can’t compete in the cash way, I must withdraw.” For want of that knowledge, as we shall now show, he was led on to the lawyers.

“I have no doubt it will be all right,” again observed Mrs. McDermott, who, having considered the matter further over, remembered what Mrs. Trattles had said about the property. “I have no doubt it will be all right,” repeated she, thinking Mr. Bunting was modest and did not wish to magnify his means.

Our friend inwardly wished that it might be all right.

“Well, then,” resumed Mrs. McDermott, measuring the towel off with her forefinger, “as ladies are not great hands at business, and I really know nothing about it”—here she did herself injustice, for she was a dab hand at it, and always thought herself cheated, whatever she got—“as ladies are not great hands at business, and I really know nothing whatever about it, perhaps the best thing will be to leave the further arrangements to our respective lawyers.”

“Perhaps it will,” assented Mr. Bunting, who had a very wholesome dread of their perplexing interference. How many promising matches he had known them nip in the bud! In fact no man should say he is going to be married until he gets their assent. There are far more fires stamped out than fanned up.

“Mr. Ballivant—Mr. George Ballivant, of Hassenden, is my solicitor,” observed Mrs. McDermott. “There are two

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

Ballivants, George and John—but I don't like John, he let a party rather get the advantage of me in the matter of a cow. George is my man, and I'll send for him to come over, say to-morrow—the sooner these matters are settled the better, and then we shall have nothing but pleasurable arrangements to occupy us."

"So be it," said Mr. Bunting, with a bow, and certain inward qualms as to the result.

"Well, then, shall we go and see Rosa?" asked Mamma, rising and folding her Baden-Baden towel as she spoke.

"If you please," said Mr. Bunting, getting up from the stool of repentance and proceeding to open the door.

Mamma then led the way down the step, and along the little passage to where a yellow ochre sheep-skin denoted the descent to the drawing-room. The door opened, when lo! who should appear but our fat friend Jasper; Jasper in the full swing of Miss Rosa's work box, just as if it were his own—Miss, too, smiling through her Ringlets at something he was saying.

"Holloa, old boy! how are you?" said Mr. Bunting, haughtily, after squeezing Rosa's soft hand with a gloveless embrace. He had come in with the full expectation of saluting her more enthusiastically, and was much disappointed at the result.

"Holloa, old boy, how are you?" was the familiar inquiry he now made of the destroyer of all his expected bliss.

"Tol-lol," replied Jasper, now carelessly rolling a pink and a green silk winder backwards and forwards on the table in a race.

Mr. Bunting then took a seat on the other side of the charmer, who was busy pricking her fingers pretending to work, though in reality much perplexed at this unlucky meeting of her suitors. She well knew what Mamma had been doing, and now judged from her face that things had gone right, and that she ought not to have been in Ringlets. But Rosa maintained an equitable equilibrium between the two gentlemen notwithstanding, giving as much of her attention to one as the other. And each ultimately left with a comfortable

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

anticipation of the future. Jasper, who dined earliest, having to go first, Mamma was enabled to inform Mr. Bunting at parting that she had written to Mr. Ballivant to be at Privett Grove at twelve on the morrow, when she hoped Mr. Bunting would be able to come. And Mr. Bunting promised that he would ; and being called away with her keys, our hero drew for the bliss and interest that he had been obliged to leave in Cupid's treasury before.

The house being then quiet, Mamma and Miss had an anxious confab, in which each told the other what their respective guests had said and done—Jasper having in fact been, as Miss Rosa expressed it, quite “as rude to her as Mr. Bunting.” Mamma said well, that there would soon be an end of that work, inasmuch as she had written to Mr. Ballivant to come in the morning, and put things upon a proper footing, for she was getting tired of procrastination ; and, moreover, she thought (though this she kept to herself), that these wild youths might be the means of keeping the steady old Jug away from the house. So she determined to close the accounts one way or other.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

THE GRAND INQUISITION.



EXT day at eleven o'clock, for Mamma had made the appointment an hour earlier than she told Mr. Bunting to come, in order that she might, what she called, "insense Mr. Ballivant into the case," a Hassenden fly drove up to the door, from which emerged a stout, elderly gentleman, in a shiny black coat and vest, a pudding white cravat with flowing ends, and drab shorts and continuations, who, despite John Thomas's caution, presently came head foremost into the drawing-room. After a series of stumbles, which looked very like bringing him on his knees altogether, he at length recovered his legs, and began with the bow that he intended for entering. Mrs. McDermott having apologised as usual for the step, then backed him into a well-cushioned chair, and drawing her own straight-backed one close up to him, proceeded in a voluble manner to explain all how and about the cause of her wanting him.

Mr. Ballivant was well through the morning of life, and, moreover, had had three wives, with a numerous family by each, though never a penny with any, so that he was quite past all the romance and sentiment of the thing, and looked upon matrimony in a conveyancing point of view. A beautiful young lady about to be transferred to a well-looking gentleman, provided said gentleman satisfied the expectations of Mamma.

"Query—what are the expectations?" As much as she can get of course, replied Mr. Ballivant, answering his own question; and he thought he saw his way to what was wanted.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

Mr. Ballivant was rather a good hand at this sort of work, and had tied some couples up so tightly that they were almost starved themselves in order that their descendants might live. Moreover he knew there was competition in this case, and though he did not like Sivin-and-Four, he had no objection to his paper. So he thought what with one or other of the gentlemen, he would have a very good job, and doubtless get a large slice of sugary almondy bride-cake, of which he was particularly fond—as indeed we all are, only somehow we seldom get any now—cards are a very poor substitute for cake. Punctual to his appointment, scarcely had the drawing-room clock ceased striking eleven, for it was always an hour in arrear, when Mr. Bunting (who had come unattended, and put up puffing Billy, as sore-eyed Sam called the gray, himself) was seen wending his way past the window, making for the front door. A gentle tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, of the bell, was quickly followed by the tramp of John Thomas's feet to open the door.

“He will show him into the parlour,” observed Mrs. McDermott, as Mr. Ballivant began fidgetting and getting himself ready to rise for a presentation—“he will show him into the parlour; and now, before we go,” continued she, gathering herself up, and growing urgent as she spoke, “Don't forget to ask him about his castle, whether it has turrets, and towers, and everything becoming,” adding, “Rosa would like a nice place. Now mind the step,” continued she, leading the way to the door, and pointing to the unfortunate impediment, which being cleared, she continued her course along the passage, giving Mr. Ballivant a similar caution as to the ascending step at the parlour door. That being opened, Mr. Bunting was discovered warming his hands before a spluttering fire, after a rather chilly ride, rendered more irksome by the unfortunate infirmity of his horse, who, indeed, seemed to get worse in his wind instead of better.

Mrs. McDermott advanced and received him most cordially, apologising for the badness of the fire, fearing he was cold, and then introducing Mr. Ballivant to warm him, after a few



MR. BALLIVANT MAKES INQUIRIES.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

common-places about the weather, she said she would retire, as she really knew nothing about business, and they would do much better without her. So saying, she gave her crinoline a twirl, observing as she sailed away, that they would find her in the drawing-room when they were done. And in another second our hero found himself alone with his father confessor, pic-nics, polkas, sonnets, regattas, witchery of all sorts coming at last to the dull shrine of Plutus. Half an hour would settle the hopes and aspirations of half a year.

Mr. Ballivant was a rough man but an honest one, and treated every thing in a cool business-like way.

"Well, now," said he, scrutinising our dandified friend attentively as the rustle of the departing petticoats subsided, "I s'pose you know what I've come for. I've nothing to do with your looks, or your manners, or your figure, or nothing of that sort—those the ladies will please themselves about—but just to inquire into your circumstances, what you have got, and what you will do, in short."

"Just so," replied Mr. Bunting, who knew the point quite as well as Mr. Ballivant did.

"Miss McDermott will have a purty fortune," observed Mr. Ballivant, beginning by enhancing his offering, "and for looks, I think, I may say she is unsurpassed."

"She's beautiful!" exclaimed Mr. Bunting, enthusiastically "and as good as she's beautiful; in fact," added he, "hers is

'Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.'

"Well, then, we'll not go into that point either," interrupted Mr. Ballivant, "but just dot down what you think we should do." So saying, he placed a couple of chairs side by side at the table, and diving into his outside coat pocket, drew forth a sheet of note paper, and a little brown Russia leather inkstand.

"Always travel with my own implements," observed he, unscrewing the top of the inkstand, and placing it before him; "ladies' pens never write, only scratch," continued he, taking one of his own out. He then put on a pair of formidable-

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

looking tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles, through which, having glanced at the great broad nib of his pen, he smoothed out his paper, and after a good steady stare at our friend, as though he were about to take his portrait, said, "What shall we begin with, land or cash, £ s. d. ?"

"Ah, Sir, I see it's the old Hudibrastic story,

' For when upon their ungot heirs
Th' entail themselves and all that's theirs,
What blinder bargain e'er was driven
Or wager laid at six or seven,
To pass themselves away, and turn
Their children's tenants ere they're born,' "

exclaimed Mr. Bunting, "everything tied up now-a-days."

"Safe bind, safe find," replied Mr. Ballivant, nothing moved by Mr. Bunting's poetry; but moving his pen as if he wished to be writing.

Seeing there was no help for it, Mr. Bunting began with his money, rehearsing his oft-repeated lesson with the ease of a charity school-boy saying his catechism, so much in consols, so much in Indian debentures, so much in railway shares, &c., all of which Mr. Ballivant recorded in tremendous thick millstone-like letters as Mr. Bunting spoke.

When Mr. Ballivant invited him to his land, our hero went very delicately over that part of his story, observing that he did not exactly know how they could make it the subject of a settlement, inasmuch as it was forest which yielded an uncertain income—much or little—dependent of course upon the quantity of wood they cut; but Mr. Ballivant having duly consulted the nib of his pen, thought Mr. Coupler, the conveyancer, would make something of it; at all events, he would record the name, age, and acreage of the wood. And our hero having supplied him with these particulars, and given him a good deal of visionary information into the bargain, referring him to "Daftun on Planting" in corroboration of what he said, tried to have his own innings by asking about the "purty fortune" which his interrogator had mentioned at starting.

Mr. Bunting had been to Doctors' Commons, and knew that

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Mamma had the property for life. This turn rather threw the man-of-law off his point, and put him upon the evasive tack.

"Yes, she would have a purty fortune—purty fortune for a lady, at least," replied Mr. Ballivant, feeling that Mr. Boyston was going to pinch him in return.

"Well, but is it in possession?" asked our friend.

"Possession? yes, in possession—possession of her Mamma—Mrs. McDermott, at least."

"Ah, that's another matter," replied our hero. "It will be a long time before her Mamma is done with—at least, I hope so."

Mr. Ballivant hoped so too.

"Well, but Mr. Bunting supposed her Mamma would make Miss Rosa an allowance?"

Mr. Ballivant really could not answer that question.

The two then sat mute for a while, Ballivant conning over the result of his inquiries as it appeared in his great thick penmanship; Bunting considering whether he should ask Ballivant if, in the event of Mrs. McDermott marrying again, any part of the fortune went away from her. He had forgotten to look at that part of the will, the Jug not being then in the field. Thinking that might be too pointed a question, he essayed to put it sideways: "They talk of Madam marrying again," observed he, rubbing his hands with ill-counterfeited glee.

"Do they?" replied the man of law, raising his brows, as if he had never heard of it before.

"Most likely all talk," suggested Mr. Bunting.

"Most likely," assented Mr. Ballivant, casting back in his mind for something he felt he had forgot. He could not hit it off—he had milked his man clean as to his means, and could not think of any other topic. He was sure Mr. Bunting was desperately in love, and would do anything unreasonable in the way of a settlement, which is always a most desirable state of mind in which to have a young man. Ballivant then restored his little stumpy pen to its case, and after again conning his notes, arose and held them to the fire to dry the great cesspools of ink of which they were composed. Mr. Bunting, feeling like

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

a man retiring from a witness-box, arose too, saying, "Then I suppose that will be all you'll want with me?"

"I think so," replied Mr. Ballivant, tardily, "I think so; all at present, at least—stay!—save the name of your solicitor;" which Mr. Bunting having given him, our hero then shook hands with his executioner, and gladly retired to his charmer. She was all smiles, radiance, and affability; and Mamma, under pretence of seeing about luncheon, presently hurried away to the scene of the inquisition. Mr. Ballivant was just unlimbering his great tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles and pocketing his implements of torture as she entered.

"Well, what have you made out?" exclaimed Mrs. McDermott, with bated breath, hastening up to him.

"Well, mum, I think he'll do," replied Mr. Ballivant, slowly and sententiously, "I think he'll do."

"You do, do you!" exclaimed Mrs. McDermott.

"Yes, mum, I think he will—he has a purty fortune."

"How much?" asked she, coming at once to the point.

"Well, that I can't exactly say, mum, until I make further inquiries; but I should say he has a purty fortune—yes, a purty fortune. And Miss Rosa, I told him, would have a purty fortune too."

"Yes, when I'm done with it," rejoined Mrs. McDermott.

"Certainly," assented Mr. Ballivant, who suspected as much.

"It's not a case of necessity, you know," whispered Mrs. McDermott. "Rosa has another string to her bow, and a good one."

"Perhaps so, mum," assented Mr. Ballivant, "perhaps so, mum; but there's an old saying, you know, mum, about the two stools, that you'll perhaps remember, mum."

"There's no fear of that in this case," asserted Mamma.

"Well, as far as this gentleman is concerned I should say not," replied Mr. Ballivant.

"Nor the other either," rejoined Mrs. McDermott.

"Then Miss Rosa is well laid in, and no doubt something will come of it; meanwhile I will make some inquiries and report progress to you as quickly as I can." So saying,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Mr. Ballivant made a sort of crab-like movement towards the door, in which he was checked by the following exclamation from Mamma :

“ But how about the Castle, is there a keep and a dungeon, and everything proper ? ”

“ Oh, the Castle ! ” exclaimed Mr. Ballivant, stamping as he recollected himself ; “ I knew there was something I’d forgotten. It *was* the Castle ! How provoking ! Had a flag-staff in my mind all the time, and somehow it got carried quite away to sea.”

“ Oh, yes, there should be a flag-staff too ! you know,” replied Mamma, “ else how would people know when they are at home ? ”

“ Well then, mum, I really quite forgot all about it,” said Mr. Ballivant, honestly. “ I really forgot all about it, thinking of the more important points. Shall I make an excuse for seeing Mr. Bunting again ? ”

“ I hardly know,” mused Mrs. McDermott, “ I hardly know. Perhaps we could manage an opportunity after luncheon.”

“ Luncheon I never take, mum, thank’ee,” replied Mr. Ballivant, hauling up a great gold watch by its new blue ribbon from his fob. “ I dine at three, and it will take me that time to get home ; but I’ll tell you what I can do, mum, I can make the inquiries by letter along with the others I have to institute.”

“ Well, that may do perhaps,” observed Mrs. McDermott, “ or Rosa might make them herself of Mr. Bunting.”

“ Certainly,” assented Mr. Ballivant ; “ or we might both make them, and then we could see how the stories agreed.”

“ That would do,” said Mrs. McDermott, apparently satisfied, and now leading the way to the door. “ Rosa ! ” exclaimed she, as she got into the passage, “ Rosa ! Mr. Ballivant is going away, dear ! ” whereupon our fair heroine broke off her *tête-à-tête* with our friend, and came out of the drawing-room at once to greet and bid Mr. Ballivant good-bye.

Ballivant bowed low to our beauty, who graciously tendered him her hand, which encouraged the grand inquisitor to repeat

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

the opinion to her he had previously expressed to Mamma, namely, that he thought Mr. Bunting would do; adding, that "he hoped he would make her a good husband, which he was sure she deserved to have; and that being about as much gallantry as he could muster at the moment, he turned to Mamma, saying, "Still you know, mum, it is well to be prudent, and I would advise you to keep Miss back a little for the present." Whereupon Rosa, forgetting she had left the drawing-room door open, replied gaily, "Oh, you needn't be afraid of me, Mr. Ballivant! You needn't be afraid of me, I'm not one of the sentimental sort," a hearing that was anything but agreeable to our hero, who thought himself quite irresistible.

The old cast-iron-like cab-horse, having waited at the door for his cargo, Mr. Ballivant was presently in the fetid vehicle, and the harsh steps being raised, the dirty driver whipped lazily away, quite unconscious of the sensation the appearance of his passenger was creating in the country. "What's up?" was the question at many a dinner and tea-table that day as Ballivant's vehicle was traced to Privett Grove. Was it the Jug? or was it Miss Rosa? or was it the young Banker? or who? They would like uncommonly to know. Meanwhile, Mr. Ballivant having driven away from the door, Miss Rosa tripped gaily back to our friend and embraced him as if she was the most loving, affectionate lady in the world—as if it was a regular case of *Perish Savoy!* with regard to the gentleman's feelings. And Puffing Billy, late Owen Ashford, having at length got Mr. Bunting home, he packed up his grandfather's Daftun and sent it by book-post to Mr. Ballivant, in corroboration of what he had said about the capabilities of his forest. And Rosa, reviewing the past, really thought that the gipsy's prophecy was going to come true. And, considering that Ballivant was satisfied, we really see no reason for forbidding the banns.

Let us now return to other parties who will be instrumental in unravelling the mystery.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

THE DUKE OF TERGIVERSATION'S VISITING LIST.



THE Juvenile day will have prepared our readers for the approach of that festive season, when bitter frosts, and tradesmen's bills, are supposed to promote hilarity, and when those who have anything to give away think that now is the time for doing it. Christmas, in short, was coming; though it is but justice to the Comet year to say that it was a very different winter to the one that succeeded it. Indeed, the Comet year had no winter at all. Be it remembered, that with its successor (1859-60) the first fall of snow was on the 21st of October, and the last on the 28th of May—the week after Epsom.

Among those who were anxious to increase their difficulties in this our Comet year was our noble friend, the Duke of Tergiversation, who thought to propitiate tradesmen, and smooth all parties over with a ball and supper. Perhaps he was moved to this end by a desire to get rid of our fox-shooting friend, the Prince Pirouetteza, who, independently of being always in the way, was not quite so cleanly in his habits as the Duke could wish. And though His Grace had no objection to helping Lady Honoria Hopkins to a husband, he did not want to be the victim of a procrastinated courtship. So he determined to try what a ball and supper would do in the way of acceleration.

We often think it must be a difficult thing for a great man to find the exact equator of his visiting list—the broad line of demarcation that admits happy Brown and yet

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

excludes poor pouting Jones and Robinson. The Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation managed their popularity matters upon a sort of debtor and creditor principle, those from whom they expected to get anything being sure to be asked, whilst those who had been used were postponed for further consideration, or until it was seen what the first shower of cards produced.

The process of filtration somewhat resembled the passing of a bill through Parliament, the measure originating in the Lower House, viz., in that of Mr. Cucumber, who, with the aid of his old visiting lists, arranged a new one of all the producible people in the country, with such observations as occurred to him in the course of his references to poll-books, and the notes he kept of the conversations he heard or what other people told him. To this he added a supplementary list of officers and parties who might be brought from a distance, a ball at a castle being always very attractive. The list was then presented to His Grace, who went through the names seriatim, hearing the *pros* and *cons* on each party, and finally handing it to the Duchess, who went through it in her own fashion, perhaps restoring names that the Duke had struck out, and striking out names that the Duke had retained. A dissolution of Parliament appearing probable, and the Duke having certain ambitious views on the county, the list was now scanned with more than ordinary care and attention, His Grace and Mr. Cucumber devoting a whole morning to the subject. The A.'s were disposed of without any difficulty.

His Grace then turned over the page and got among the B's. — Berrys, Beauchamps, Bedfords, Binks, Browns, Brews, Bushells, Butterwells, Bedingfields, Beningboroughs, Bowderoukins, Mr. and Mrs. "Well, now, what are the Bowderowkins's queried for?" asked the Duke.

"Bowderoukins, Bowderoukins—'scuse me—but I think the name will be Roukins, Bowderoukins," replied Mr. Cucumber, glancing at the list as he spoke.

"Bowderoukins it is," assented His Grace, looking at it again. "Well, what is the objection to the Bowderoukins?"

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"No objection whatever, your Grace, that I know of; only they have not been here before."

"Haven't they. There will be some reason for that then. Turn to the poll-book, and see how he voted."

"He was not on the Register at the last election, your Grace," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"Is he now?"

"Yes, your Grace."

"And nothing against him?"

"Nothing whatever, your Grace."

"Have them by all means," replied the Duke. "Secure him against another time, you know;" so saying, the Duke struck his pen through the query, and proceeded with the list.

"Boyston," presently read His Grace. "Boyston, Boyston; is that the gentleman they call the Jug?"

"It is, your Grace," smiled Mr. Cucumber.

"What is there a query to his name for?" asked the Duke.

"Oh, that is for the Duchess," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"Her Grace objected to his nankin trousers on a former occasion, and that is merely to draw Her Grace's attention to the name."

"Well, we will leave the Duchess to settle the point herself," said the Duke, passing on, adding, he "Mus'n't come without something of the sort at all events."

"Certainly not, your Grace," replied Mr. Cucumber, with an emphasis.

"Bunting,—who is Mr. Bunting?" now asked the Duke.

"Mr. Bunting is a very genteel young gentleman, who is down suitoring Miss McDermott of Privett Grove."

"Ah, the little blue-eyed girl, who comes out hunting?" observed the Duke.

"The same," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"I thought she was going to marry the banker's son," observed His Grace.

"Well, it's between the two," rejoined Mr. Cucumber; "even betting, I believe, which gets her."

"You are sure Mr. Bunting is all right?" said the Duke,

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

adding, "I shouldn't like to have any convict captains down here."

"Oh, all right, all right," replied Mr. Cucumber, confidently. "I've ascertained all that — quite the gentleman, quite the gentleman."

So Mr. Bunting was passed for a ticket, subject, of course, to the approval of the Duchess.

The B's being disposed of with Mr. Bunting, the C's came next. The Crofts, the Cranes, the Cambos, the Churchhills, the Cheadles, the Cutlers, the Coopers, the Cottons, the Chatterleys.

"Well, what are Chatterleys queried for?" asked the Duke.

"The Chatterleys are queried, your Grace, because you struck them off after the last fête. Mr. Chatterley voted wrong."

"Then if they were struck off before, what occasion is there to put them on this list?" asked the Duke.

"They have been presented at Court since," replied Mr. Cucumber.

"Have they?" replied the Duke; "so much the worse; shows they don't know their places—sha'n't come here." His Grace striking his pen through their names, saying, "Every pig-jobber goes to Court now-a-days."

The unhappy Chatterleys, Mr., Mrs., and two Misses, being thus summarily disposed of, the Duke proceeded with the list, retaining of course the names of our friends the Goldspinks, Mr., Mrs., and Mr. Junior; also the McDermotts, Mrs. and Miss, Mr. Jovey Jessop, and many others in whom the reader will take no interest.

When His Grace at length arrived at the W's, and found the name of Mr. Brown White alone, he paused, for he recollected Black White's gallant riding with Mr. Jovey Jessop's hounds, and thought he ought to be rewarded.

* Sir Eardley Wilmot, in his amusing *Life of Mr. Assheton Smith*, relates how a certain notorious house-breaking, betting, bank-robbing convict once dined with a party at Tedworth House (Mr. Smith's) under the assumed name of Captain Montague.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“ Mr. Black White’s name not down,” observed His Grace, looking up at Mr. Cucumber.

“ Mr. Black White,—Mr. Black White ; no, your Grace. Mr. Black White’s name is not down. Your Grace said none of the neck-of-venison gentlemen need be put on the ball list.”

“ Well,” said the Duke, “ I suppose there would be some reason for it. However,

‘ To err is human, to forgive divine ’

We will advance Black White this time ; ” so saying, His Grace added Mr. Black White’s name to the list of guests.

“ Mrs. Black White, then—would your Grace put Mrs. Black White on ? ”

“ Mrs. Black White ? No, certainly not,” replied the Duke ; “ got a brandy nose and wears a bad front. Can’t bear a woman with a brandy nose and a bad front.” So Mrs. Black White was rejected.

The important document was then ready for the Duchess’s inspection, upon whom Mr. Cucumber waited, and went through it again, explaining the additions and objections—Bowderoukins, Chatterleys, Nankins, Black White, and all. When the Duchess inquired for Mrs. Black White, and heard the reason why she had been rejected, Her Grace placed her name on the list, saying, “ What has the Duke to do with her bad front ? ” adding, “ she may not always wear the same one, you know.” So Mrs. Black White was rescued at the last stage. The list being thus duly passed, a suitable number of imposing-looking cards were then produced, and the process of filling up the invitations commenced, and proceeded to the usual postal conclusion. Great was the emptying of the Castle bag into the country post-office, it being no longer thought derogatory, as it once was, to send invitations by other than a special messenger.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER XC.

CARDS FOR A BALL.



WHAT a commotion it caused in the country when the great ducal cards with butter-pat-like seals permeated through the post-office. How, when it transpired, as most things do transpire, that they were coming, the doubtful ones chucked up their chins, and pretended they would not go if invited ; how the sure not to be invited said there was no fear of their being asked ; and how the safe ones speculated upon whether Mrs. So-and-So would be there.

It spoils some people's pleasure to find others at parties who they think would be better away. The exclusiveness of the thing is half the enjoyment to many. If the Duchess had submitted her list to the revision of the country at large it would have been extremely select at the end of the operation—reduced to something like a fox and goose board at the end of the game. Her Grace's boudoir would have held the party.

Now there was a great to-do in all the country houses, Mr. Cucumber having told a dozen people—all in strict confidence, of course—who in their turns told a dozen more, till there was not a milliner's girl or a seamstress in the district who did not know what was going to happen. Indeed, it is these poor creatures who are mainly interested in such events, for their services are all wanted by everybody at once, and there is little rest for them until the ball is over. But we have not got to their miseries yet, the spasms and convulsions of the country having yet to be undergone. Let us endeavour to describe them.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

Mrs. Chatterley, who was what the Duke would call an "ambitious woman," said, in reply to the expression of a doubt on the part of Miss Mary, that "Of course they would be asked. How was a ball to be made up if it wasn't from people like themselves, the court set?" And she opened the letter-bag at breakfast the next morning with as much confidence of finding a card as a fisherman puts his hand into the landing-net, who has seen his trout flickering in it the minute before. What ho! no card!

The *Times*, three tradesmen's bills, and a wine merchant's circular. Mrs. Chatterley said nothing, showed no symptom of disappointment, nor did the young ladies, but all had their unpleasant misgivings. Mr. Chatterley chuckled to think he would escape the terrible balloon-like ball dresses.

Next day was the same, no card, but an increased supply of Christmas medicine. Still there was no public demonstration, though the young ladies confided their worst fears to each other in private. On the third morning, however, it being known that the Netherwoods and others had received their invitations, Mrs. Chatterley on emptying the bag carefully, observed that the Castle ball must be a tradesmen's one as they had not sent them cards. And this view, being adopted by the ladies, and endorsed by Mr. Chatterley, who observed it was most likely a new way the Duke had adopted for paying his old Christmas bills, the ladies ordered the barouche, and went driving about, tossing up their heads, when asked if they were going, as if they were many cuts above such an assembly.

The Bowderoukinses, on the other hand, were delighted when they got their card—a large glazed paste-board with the Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation requesting the honour of Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins's company to a ball and supper! Well, wonders would never cease! They had always gone upon the "'umble tack," talking of the Tergiversations as people many cuts above them. Now places were changed, and the Duke and Duchess absolutely considered it honour to be visited by them. At least they said so, and that, too, in print, which everybody believes.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"WHAT HAVE YOU GOT THERE, MISTRESS BOWDEROUKINS?" demanded our fat friend, as he saw his delighted spouse coming grinning along from the larder at post time with the important document in her hand.

"Guess!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, putting it behind her.

"Letter from the Lord Chamberlain, perhaps?" suggested Mr. Bowderoukins, ironically, well knowing what it was.

"No! guess again!" replied Mrs. Bowderoukins.

"Well, perhaps Mr. Sugars, the grocer's bill," said he, thinking to humour the delusion.

"No!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowderoukins, unable any longer to restrain herself, "card from the Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation!" putting it full before him.

"Only think!" ejaculated Bowderoukins.

"Only think!" responded his ecstatic spouse; "what will Mrs. Tom Tucker say?"

"Death of her," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, rubbing his fat hands.

"What shall I put on, Mr. Bowderoukins?" now demanded his smiling wife.

"Put on, my dear," replied Bowderoukins, well knowing what that question would lead up to—"put on, my dear?—There's your cinnamon-coloured satin, or your striped—what de call it?"

"Oh, Mr. Bowderoukins, the striped is a morning dress."

"Well, then, there is your fine green genoa velvet—give it a turn."

"Oh, Mr. Bowderoukins, I have worn it till everybody is tired of seeing me in it. It is the dress that that odious Mrs. Cambo called me the Emerald Isle in. I'm sure you wouldn't wish me to go a figure the first time, Mr. Bowderoukins."

"Certainly not, my dear," replied Mr. Bowderoukins, "certainly not, my dear; but you must not cut the Duchess out in her own house, you know."

"Not much fear of that," replied Mrs. Bowderoukins; "but I really think I should have a new dress on this occasion, dear Bowderoukins. Don't you think I should, Bowderoukins?"

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

“ Well, my dear, I don’t know, I’m sure, my dear. You are the best judge, my dear—only it’s candle-light, my dear—things look very well by candle-light that look only middling by daylight, my dear ; my black shorts are not very good when you come to examine them by daylight.”

“ Oh, Mr. Bowderoukins, you don’t understand these things—gentlemen never do. You know, I must have a new dress, sooner or later, Mr. Bowderoukins ; so why not have it now when it will be a credit to wear it ? ”

“ Well, my dear, you know best,” replied Mr. Bowderoukins, shuffling away with his newspaper, seeing it was of no use contending with a lady who has made up her mind. And the same post that conveyed their answer to the Castle, carried a letter to Madame Gigot, in Geranium Crescent, for a new ball dress of the most fashionable order, to be down without fail in three days.

Mr. Jovey Jessop’s and his Jug’s cards were sent in the same envelope, the Duchess having heard of the Jug’s frequent peregrinations to Privett Grove, and relying upon the ladies smartening him up. It was not that Her Grace objected so much to the Jug’s nankins as to his not having them clean, the Jug having been chucked out of his buggy on a former occasion and alighting on his knees, had gone about all the evening with two great mud stains, looking for all the world like a mole-catcher without his traps.

Sivin-and-four of course had a card, including Mrs. Sivin-and-four and our esteemed young friend Jasper. “ Sivin and four’s elivin and sivin’s eighteen, that card’s from the Castle,” said he, as he saw it lying conspicuously on the drawing-room table, “ and sivin’s twenty-eight, wish I mayn’t have to pay for the party ; ” so saying he trudged downstairs into the Bank to have a look at the ledger.

“ Sivin and four’s elivin, and sivinty-sivin’s eighty-eight, just as I thought,” said he, surveying the deficiency creeping on again. “ Wish he would pay up instead of keeping one out of one’s bed at night, incurrin’ no end of expense of conveyance, and gloves, and nobody knows what. Really think I’ll say no,

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

and write a line drawing his 'tention to his account, for unless one's always at him, he thinks he has nothin' to do but draw, and the money will be forthcoming—just as if one had a well to draw it out of." When, however, answering time came, Mrs. Goldspink accepted in the names of all three, and begged the banker to keep his account for a more favourable opportunity.

Words cannot depict Mrs. Black White's astonishment at receiving a card, and that not a supplementary one, but sent in the first issue. Mrs. Brown White had always twitted Mrs. Black White with not being castle company, and now she was suddenly elevated into equality with herself. She could not resist walking over to Belladonna Cottage to see her; but Mrs. Brown White, suspecting the object of her errand, took the wind out of her sails by saying she supposed she would have got a card for the great to-do at the Castle, adding, with a yawn, as if she was out every night in her life, that she didn't know that Brown and she would be going, they had been so often that they were about tired of the thing. Still she would advise Mrs. Black to go, as she had never been there, and the castle was worth seeing, especially under such favourable circumstances, and altogether she patronised her not a little. So Mrs. Black White did not take much by her mission. However, what with those that were asked, and those that were not asked, and those that thought they ought to be asked, and those who would not have gone if they had been asked, there was a pretty commotion engendered throughout the country; and fashion books, and pattern books, were in great demand among the fair, and many were the orders for dresses, all, of course, wanted immediately.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

CHAPTER XCI.

THE DUCAL DIFFICULTIES.



In the Ball-Room.

ET us now take a glance at the domestic affairs at the castle. Getting up a ball is generally excitement enough for most people, but the Duke and Duchess of Tergiversation's excitement was considerably increased by the difficulty there was in getting the necessary supplies.

Country tradespeople can seldom afford to give long credit, and Mr. Cucumber's applications and orders were too generally met by the production of some long-standing bill which it would be a real convenience to the parties to have settled. The Duke was a great economist up to a sovereign. That sum exceeded he went right overhead in extravagance. He would criticise the board at a toll-bar from top to bottom, to be sure he wasn't defrauded of a halfpenny, while he would think nothing of ordering a couple of hundred pounds' worth of cut flowers for an evening party.

"Flat," said His Grace to Mr. Hydrangia, the Bayswater

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

florist, as he accompanied that genius on a tour of inspection of the receiving rooms, on the evening of a great London ball.

"Flat," repeated he, as they got into the drawing-room.

"Don't know, your Grace," replied Mr. Hydrangia, "there are two hundred pounds' worth of exotics here."

"Then put two hundred pounds' worth more," replied the Duke, without a moment's hesitation.

"How much?" exclaimed he, cantering up Purbeck Bar on his way home from half-a-day's hunting at Sandforth Heath.

"Tuppence!" replied old deaf Turner, the toll-keeper, holding out his hand for the money.

"Tup-pence! it is but three half-pence surely," replied the Duke, pulling up, and going attentively through the list on the board—broad wheels, narrow wheels, exemptions, and all.

"Ah, well, twopence it is," at length replied he, coming to the horse department—"There's your money!" adding, as he cantered away, "The man who would rob me of a single halfpenny, would rob me of all I'm worth in the world."

It was seeing the Duke at one of these wrangles, coupled with his own innate regard for the siller, that made Mr. Haggish so obstreperous about the "green silk whopcord," that terrible outlay that had cost the Duke eighteenpence. But we are getting to the out-door department, instead of confining ourselves to the internal arrangements of the Castle. Well, the Duke's credit, we are sorry to say, was not very great, but he never would want for anything on that account; and on Cucumber devolved the responsibility of seeing the orders executed. The Duke was well cared for too, and many were the inquiries made after him by the Assurance Office people in London, the directors of some of which had proposed to club together to take him a-moor to keep him in health, thinking the battueing was not sufficiently severe exercise.

There is no doubt that London is fast absorbing the retail trade of the country, and will do so entirely if shopkeepers persist in making summer hideous by sending in their bills

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

half-yearly and dunning accordingly; but in a case like the present, where the entertainment was given as much to procure votes as to promote gaiety, it would never do to throw the patronage away upon the metropolis, and come what would the necessary supplies must be procured on the spot. Still a country confectioner's is a miserable affair, little in the shop, and nothing behind, though there is never any want of enterprise in the way of taking large orders, the parties relying on the assistance of all the drunken out-of-place creatures, and trusting to excuses, and "the cat," for getting out of their difficulties. The cat got in at the last moment—the cat upset the cream—the cat ate the jelly—the cat destroyed the game; there never was such a cat.

In the Duke's case it was not so much the cookery that was wanted—for that could be done in the Castle—as the material wherewith to cook. When Betty Barns could get three and sixpence for her fowls at Jollyfield market, she was not going to send them on any visionary prospect of some day receiving three and nine from Mr. Cucumber for them. So that gentleman issued his orders without much success, for country people hang together, and if one says no, they generally all say no. If, therefore, the pleasure of a ball is enhanced by the trouble it gives, this ought to have been a very enjoyable one. A ball at Willis's Rooms is not considered equivalent to one in a private house, simply, we suppose, because all the paraphernalia is at hand, no taking doors off their hinges, no turning master's study upside down, or making the library into a room for the ladies. So with the supper—supper for so many—bill for supper for so many—an order and a cheque—comprise the trouble—does the whole business. That, however, will only do for the division of labour peculiar to the unlimited means and appliances of the capital. The country must always be dependent upon separate purveyors, unless, indeed, parties choose to entrust the arrangements to some great London house; but then what a thing it would be if it should come a snowstorm, and the supper be drifted up short of its destination! A ball without a supper would never do. The Duke

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

of Tergiversation, however, had enough work with Hydrangia and people when in London, without troubling them to come into the country, so he drew his supplies from native industry.

First and foremost undoubtedly is the champagne. There must be plenty of champagne, at least, plenty of pop, fizz, banging, for as it is not all gold that glistens, so it is not all *grand mousseux* that sparkles. The wine the Castle cellars supplied, and Mr. Cucumber and the butler understood the judicious mixture—when to interpolate a few bottles of grape, when to sow the pure supply stronger. Lights come next. There must be a perfect blaze of light, and in these glorious days when competing companies almost force their goods upon the public, sending their “cash prices” and their “booking prices,” as if determined to have an order, there can be little difficulty in procuring an abundant supply; and Cucumber gave magnificent orders for transparent wax, and China wax, and Ceylon wax, and the finest Colza oil, all of which came down carefully packed, with obsequious invoices, in some instances the railway-carriage paid—for weak-minded tradesmen are terribly obnoxious to the influence of rank. Next in importance to the wine and light is the music, and whether or not we have recently turned a military nation, there can be no doubt that we have greatly advanced as a musical one. There is scarcely a village of any size without its band, and where nothing but cock and dog fighting went on, and nothing but bacchanalian songs were heard, we have now the notes of soft music wafted on the breeze. We cannot but think if our legislators were to increase the harmless enjoyments of the people—say throw open the Museums, the Picture Galleries, the Crystal Palace on a Sunday—they would do them far more real service than by burthening them with a troublesome franchise that they do not require.

Well, the wine, lights and music being procured, the delicacies of the season—the beef, mutton, and cheese, as the sailor described a sumptuous repast he had had—were next considered, and Haggish was charged to make predatory excursions among the poultry whenever he went out with the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

hounds. Eggs, butter, and cream, too, were sought far and wide. So what with contributions on the spot, and consignments from town, things at length assumed the dimensions of a grand entertainment, and the Castle looked as if it would stand a prolonged siege, or sustain a very heavy invasion.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER XCII.

THE GENERAL DIFFICULTIES.



HAVING glanced at the Duke's difficulties, let us take a look at those of the guests. By the time the cards became due, the winter had just got to that critical period when we may look for all sorts of weather within the short space of four-and-twenty hours,—rain, snow frost, sunshine; hunting on one side of a hill, skating on the other. The weather, however, does not in general make much matter to the ladies—so long as they can get into their carriages and out again, they do not care much what it is. It is the gentlemen who are always looking at their aneroids and land marks, speculating on the atmosphere, and calculating the damage to their invaluable harness and horses—horses that they wouldn't take any money for.

And in truth those who went to the Duke's on a ball night had needs look about them, for the stable accommodation was scanty at best, and three in a stall nothing uncommon. Providing proper stable accommodation for the visitors' horses is another of the difficulties peculiar to country gaiety. Mr. Willis would look rather blank if all the coachmen setting down at his rooms in King's Street were to want billets for their horses and something for themselves. The Duke looked upon the matter in a metropolitan point of view—he didn't ask the horses—they formed no part of the entertainment—could not be a horse quadrille if it was ever so; therefore, after such accommodation as the master of the horse and Mr. Haggish could spare was filled, the comers were left

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

a good deal to chance and the care of the neighbouring publicans. First come, first served, was generally the order of the day.

A ball being to the ladies a good deal what a fox hunt is to the gentlemen, there was a great demand for quarters and filling of country houses for miles around the Castle, which on the afternoon of the day somewhat resembled a fortress in a state of siege, the martello tower-like dresses of the ladies contributing to the idea. Then the fever of anxiety was increased in some houses on finding that the martello towers could not by any means be got into the carriages—at least, not in the proportions they had theretofore been, when dresses were smaller and more controllable.

A set dinner-party on a ball night, is always an undesirable, uncomfortable affair in the country, and had better never be attempted. The ladies are always in a fidget about something, and mysterious messages are getting constantly delivered, causing abrupt risings and departures, and perhaps frowning brows on the return. Then there is that constant looking at watches, and asking the gentlemen what o'clock it is, no lady ever relying upon her own watch; and evident desire to be among the laces and flounces of the toilette instead of the flowers and fricandeaux of the dinner-table.

Young gentlemen are not much easier, and long to be at the looking-glass instead of the wine-glass—not an undesirable change from the days when it was thought necessary to be well primed before going to a ball.

Pater Familias generally does the bulk of his dressing before dinner—all most likely save putting on the immaculate tie and the No. 1 coat and vest—for he finds that stooping encourages blood to the head rather than digestion; and just as he has imbibed his usual allowance of wine, and about read himself asleep, the door opens and in glides a lady so large and gorgeous, so differently dressed to the one who went out, that he has to rub his knuckles well into his eyes in order to recognise her person. “What! Mrs. Sunnyfield, is that you?” exclaims he.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"Yes, Sun, my dear, it's me. Shouldn't you be getting ready? The carriage will be round directly."

"Well, that *is* a dress!" exclaims Sun, jumping up and hurrying out of the room, wondering what sort of a figure it will cut in the bill. He then dives into his clothes, and putting himself into his paletôt, resigns himself complacently to the hands of his fair executioner.

It is a pity the coachmakers had not foreseen the rage of crinoline, so as to have shaped their vehicles accordingly. The hooded and headed contrivances of the country—the turbot-tubs upon wheels—are but ill calculated to convey the expanded gig umbrellas they are now called upon to hold. Moreover, the buckled and buttoned things are seldom wholly proof against weather. They may be all very well in the day-time, when a traveller can see the coming storm and meet it accordingly; but it is not nice to drive eight or ten miles in the dark, with the keen wind whistling through its pet aperture into one's ear, or for a lady to feel the drop, drop, drop of the neatsfoot-oiled water from the head upon her rich pink silk or beautiful moire antique. All this, too, perhaps amid the comfortable laudations of the owner at the convenience of a carriage that can be made either a close or an open one at pleasure.

Then the job carriages; what work there is with the job carriages! What resuscitation of old post-chaises, impromptuising of post-boys, and impressing of horses—animals that scarcely know what harness is are somehow accepted as safe and sufficient security. If the history of all the quadrupeds that run in public conveyances were known, people would not be so fond of getting into them. Yet somehow the good-natured public seem to take it all for granted, and the crazier a concern is, the more they seem to like it. Look at the ram-shackling things that go out of a country town on a market day, piled up on the roof like a Covent Garden cabbage cart. But let us off to the ball and get there as best we can. And to so absorbing an event let us devote a separate chapter.

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE DUCHESS OF TERGIVERSATION'S BALL.



THE Duchess of Tergiversation, of course, had fixed her ball for the full moon, relying upon that kindly planet keeping matters right; and certainly up to the afternoon of the day things wore a very promising appearance.

But the moon had scarcely gained her ascendancy, ere that encircled haze, so popular with sportsmen—so inimical to dresses, indicated a change; and ere the melon-frames, the turbot-tubs, and the various vehicles chartered for the occasion came round to their respective doors, a very decided rain was established. Then the ladies, with much the air of peacocks striving for a port on a windy day, having at length encircled themselves into their carriages, the gentlemen dived in at random, execrating the weather and the capacious crinolines, and objurgating the Duchess for her confounded condescension—wished she had kept her cards to herself. And the whole country was then presently alive with the rumbling of wheels, the shining lights of carriages—apparently stationary, but in reality moving—surprising the country and pike people, many of which latter came to open their gates in very light attire. So the approaching forces neared the Castle just like sportsmen proceeding to a meet—some parties waxing nervous the nearer they got to it. Great people have very little idea what awe they inspire.

Fair reader, were you ever the first to arrive at a ball, or other place of public entertainment? seen the wild hurry consequent on the finishing stroke—the getting into place of the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

various actors—the bewigged and broad-backed coachman at the door, the powdered footmen within, the out-of-livery gentlemen further back? If so, we are inclined to suspect you have not repeated the experiment a second time. And yet somebody must come first; but still there is no occasion to arrive before you are asked. It is generally observable at London balls that the first persons to come are those whom the mistress least wishes to see, namely, some unfortunate country cousins whom it has been seriously debated whether to have or not, and who now show their gratitude by making themselves as conspicuous as possible, in all the eccentricity of bygone fashions. For though they have got new clothes, they are husbanding them to take back into the country—nobody, as they say, knowing them in London,

The first to arrive at the Castle on this auspicious night were our friends the Bowderoukinses, though they had had a desperate dispute about the propriety of punctuality—Mr. Bowderoukins insisting that it was only a proper mark of respect to attend punctually upon a first invitation, Mrs. Bowderoukins maintaining that a ball was not like a dinner, and that people might go to a ball any time they liked, provided they did not go before the hour fixed.

However, Bowderoukins, being master of his own horse, had the steady family nag in the vehicle at a minute to the time he fixed, and not being a man to rest quiet under impulsive circumstances, Mrs. Bowderoukins thought it best to have herself in her rich rustling red moire antique dress too. And considering the horse was but a slow one, to whom the heavy roads were anything but familiar, it said something for Jonathan's jehuship that he brought them up under the grand portico within a quarter of an hour of his estimate. Then, the leathern appliances being loosened, the oven door was opened and Mr. and Mrs. Bowderoukins turned out as best they could, just as another horse's head poked up behind to claim the honour of second place. The ports were then opened, and from a dribbling stream of carriages the line gradually became closer and more connected, until a slowly moving

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

procession was formed, reaching from the Castle to the centre gates.

But for the gleam of lights and the profusion of gaudy servants lining the spacious armour-decked entrance hall, Mrs. Bowderoukins would have admonished Bowdey on the impropriety of their early coming ; as it was she submitted to the almost mute guidance of sundry white-kidded hands, all delicately indicating the way to the cloak and tea room ; while Bowdey followed on, blinking like an owl suddenly turned out of his ivy bush into the radiance of the midday sun. Even here our friends were too soon, for only one pretty maid had got herself into her white muslin with cherry-coloured ribbons, and though the tea apparatus was on the counter-like table, the Bohea was not even put into the pots.

The fact was, the Duchess was behind hand with her toilet, having scolded her French maid well for putting her out the wrong dress, and the backwardness of the main-spring had communicated itself to the rest of the works of the Castle. Mrs. Bowderoukins, therefore, finding that she could give herself "pause," deliberately sat down, determined to "tea" for half an hour, if necessary.

She had not long to wait, for first one young group of maidens and then another came trooping in, all fuss and flowers, and gig umbrellas, chattering and wondering and wanting their beaux. Then the ladies began shaking hands, asking after the absent, and expressing their pleasure at seeing each other—some inwardly wishing their rivals were further. And they got so chatty and agreeable, and reinforcements poured in so quickly that they seemed to have forgotten all about the ball, so much so indeed, that Her Grace having at length descended, magnificently radiant, of course, wanted people to admire her freshness, so she converted Mr. Cucumber into a gentleman usher of the black rod, and sent him to summon the guests. Whereupon there was a great drawing on of gloves, arranging of lace, twirling of hoops, making way for each other to go first—for, as it has often been observed, there is more trouble in marshalling a party of justices' wives than a bevy of duchesses.

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

Then the rustling commenced amid the guidance of voluminous garments, and names were passed on from footman to footman placed at intervals on the stairs, until the guests reached the elegant groom of the chamber, whose attire far eclipsed that of most of the visitors. The Duchess was standing in state, the centre of a semicircle, formed of the Duke, Lord Marchmare, and Lady Honoria Hopkins, all splendidly attired—the Duke and his Lordship after the manner of the cock-tails, wearing the full dress uniform of the hunt—orange coloured coats, with cherry coloured linings collars and cuffs, white shorts, and white silk stockings. The Duchess dressed in a splendid new double pink satin dress with rich bouillons of tulle and point lace, a magnificent diamond stomacher, and a tiara of diamonds on her head—the light of a neighbouring cut-glass chandelier being enlisted to perfect the radiance of the group.

The Duchess was a capital hand at measuring affability, and could do the smiling and freezing almost with the same face. She could also apportion her politeness with all the accuracy of a letter-weigher—an ounce to Mrs. Young, two to Miss Springfield, three to Mr. Addleton, none to Brown White. It was as good as a play and a farce put together to stand aside and mark the trepidation depicted on the countenances of the comers, and the look of joy that prevailed after they had passed the dread ordeal.

This sort of thing, however, is not peculiar to the country. Most people have some donnish acquaintance, who patronise them in the country and shy them in town; and in these days of general locomotion it is as well to ascertain who they are, so as to avoid a rebuff. There is never much difficulty in doing so, for they are always pretty notorious—indeed, you see by a certain stately gathering as they approach, and a sort of semicircular movement that they do not “wish to detain you.” If they chance to meet you in society they accord you a very stiff bow, as much as to say, “no shaking hands here, if you please,” or, “I think, sir, your place might have been better filled in this house.” These are the charmers of society to

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

whom literary people who draw from the life are so much indebted for character and incident. Perhaps, however, there is no more valuable acquirement than that of knowing when to use the hat and when the hand.

The Duchess meanwhile continues her reception ; bows, and smiles, and curtsies, and shakes of the hand, and here and there a convenient obliviousness. The Smiths, the Fields, the Swineys, the Dockets, and the Dunns pass unseen, but the Beauchamps, and the Bedfords, are detained for a hug. Then the Langdales, the Holleydales, the Netherwoods, the Wheelers, the Cambos, the Cheadles, and the Thomsons come trooping in and pass rapidly on, while the Dingwalls and Woodroses, who are tall and good looking, are kept for awhile in the neighbourhood of the select circle.

The flow of company now becomes unbroken and continuous, names get mixed and greetings misappropriated ; but the large apartments, with the noble picture-gallery in aid, are far more than sufficient to accommodate all comers. The guests disperse and range the rooms, wandering about like cattle entering a strange field. Lord Marchhare is now beaung the beautiful Miss Rebecca Isaacs, who has come down from town with uncle Joseph Samuel, to try to get pay for that new Swaneveldt His Grace pressed so much on the admiration of his banker, when he called about his little balance. But where is that worthy gentleman with his sivin-and-four troublesome calculations ? Oh, there he is, shorts and all, yawning already, with Mrs. Goldspink in a red and yellow dress with a portentous turban on her head. Sivin-and-four can't make out why people turn night into day for the pleasure of dancing, while Mrs. Sivin-and-four, who is full of furnishing, goes prying about looking at and feeling everything, thinking and wondering what will do for their new house at Garlandale.

And now, after a few prefatory twangs, a perfect crash of music, such as only a stout country band can produce, burst forth, drawing all the ambulatory guests into the beautiful octagon ball-room, whose white and gold walls are lit up in a style extremely inimical to dirty dresses. In the company



A TREMENDOUS SWELL.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

pour at all the four doors, and the thing immediately assumes the proportions of a grand ball. Not flat at all. And as the vigorous band play the overture to the Traviata Quadrille, the grinning Prince Pirouetteza pilots in the Duchess, looking a very different prince to what he was when getting bumped on the unruly Timour the Tartar. The Duke, as we said before, had had about enough of His Highness, and meant the ball to be the grand concluding event of the visit. The ladies, however, pulled the other way, especially the Lady Honoria Hopkins, who would rather be the wife of a dirty prince than the widow of a clean Englishman. So whenever the Duke asked Cucumber in the ladies' presence if he knew anything about His Highness's movements, the Duchess would exclaim,

"Oh, dear Duke, never mind about that! never mind about that! I'm sure he's no trouble to any one."

The Prince is now a tremendous swell, with his stiff wristbands turned half way up to his elbows, and his broad chest glittering with jewelry and orders, real or imaginary. He had consumed five wax candles, to say nothing of a blazing fire, in getting himself up to his satisfaction, and in capering and attitudinising before the cheval glass in his bed-room. And now the various quadrilles being arranged, and the anxious musicians having taken breath, at a clap of the Prince's well-gloved hands, a start is effected; and away the ladies dart and glide, and the gentlemen dive and duck amid the masses of tulle and crinoline to the sound. The ball is then established, and the late timid ones are astonished that they should have thought there was anything to be afraid of. A galop follows the quadrilles, and introduces fresh comers.

Who is this pleasant looking man in a black coat with a white waistcoat and white cravat, with whom everybody shakes hands as he advances quietly up the room, with his Gibus hat in his hand? Jovey Jessop! so it is—Jovey without his Jug. What has got the old boy? Oh, yonder he is, beaung Mrs. McDermott, who really looks quite handsome in her new light gray moire antique with broad black lace flounces, and a white feather wreath around her head. And what a swell

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

old Tom is himself, fine new blue coat with a velvet collar and bright buttons, white vest, new nankins with shiny shoes, and open clocked gauze silk stockings. We will be bound to say, the old fellow thinks they will serve a double purpose, do for the ball to-night, and to be married in, if Mrs. McDermott is agreeable. He looks quite respectable and really by no means ugly. The Duchess vouchsafed him a hand as he came in, and said she was glad to see him at the Castle, quite a different reception to the one he got when he had been down on his knees. And really when we look at Mrs. McDermott and Tom we think we see a similarity between them—a sort of Mr. and Mrs. Jug-ishness.

But see! who have we here? Who is this velvety Tom-cat-looking man, all silk, satin, and jewelry, with a pink shirt front worked with festoons of flowers and humming birds. We have seen him before, heard that sardonic laugh, watched that tortuous twirl. It can't be O'Dicey? Yet O'Dicey we believe it is. O'Dicey it is, as we live! Well, who would have thought of seeing O'Dicey at a Duke's. How came he here? We will tell you, gentle reader. That great capitalist, Mr. Wanless, is going to lend His Grace three hundred and fifty thousand pounds, to relieve him from the Insurance Offices, and other troublesome people. Meanwhile the Duke is going to put his name to a little paper for the great British merchant to manipulate, and O'Dicey is down with the proper stamps for the purpose. We wish His Grace may get the proceeds.

That, however, is no business of ours. But watch O'Dicey, watch the charming impudence with which he approaches and greets the victim of the mutton chop dinner. One would think their positions had been reversed, and that O'Dicey was the loser instead of the winner.

"Holloa, old boy!" exclaims he, thrusting his hand vehemently into our hero's, "holloa, old boy! how goes it? Dash it, I've been thinking of you this I don't know how long, wondering when you were coming to have your revenge." And thereupon O'Dicey shook our friend's hand so severely

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

as almost made him doubt whether O'Dicey was the rogue the world gave him credit, or rather discredit, for being.

"Well, and have they got you spliced yet?" asks O'Dicey, with a significant glance at our friend; "have they got you spliced yet?"

"No, not yet," replies Jasper, in a tone that as good as said "I am going to be, though."

"Why, what a slow coach you are!" exclaimed O'Dicey, tickling Jasper in the ribs with his fore-finger; "I thought you'd have been old father Caudle by this time. Where's the lady?" continued he, glancing hastily round the room.

"There," replied Jasper, nodding promiscuously at a group of sprightly waltzers.

"Where?" retorted O'Dicey, not being able to recognize her.

"Here!" replied Jasper, as our fair heroine now whisked past in the scarcely-board-touching Violante Valse.

"So it is!" replied O'Dicey, now watching the floating of the triple-skirted tulle dress looped up with flowers, adding, "but she's got her hair in ringlets! What's that for?"

"Because I please," replied Jasper.

"All right," rejoined O'Dicey; adding, "glad you've cut out that man-coquette, who is only fit for a dancing-master," alluding to Mr. Bunting, in whose grasp the lovely Rosa was then revolving, her bright eyes flashing dangerously through the fluttering graces of her curls.

There was some truth in what Jasper said about the ringlets, for we may mention that Mr. Ballivant had been over to Privett Grove again, and his report of the Scotch property had turned the scales again in Jasper's favour. Otherwise there is no saying but Rosa might have had her hair plain, which Mr. Bunting always told her she looked much the best in. And here a word about the property.

Our friend Jock Haggish says that if ever he wants to get acquainted with any gentleman's private affairs, he either gans to the "Vawlet what's a coourtin' of the lady's maid, or else to yen o' them Writer Deavils i' the next toon," and it so happened that Mr. Ballivant applied to the same "Writer

PLAIN OR RINGLETTS ?

Devil" who had been similarly employed by another party (Biter and Co., we believe) on a previous occasion, who wrote word back that though he would not say Mr. Bunting was a liar, yet he would say that he was a very great "economist of the truth," for that he (the W. D.) had had this property through hands before, and there was nothing wherewith to make a settlement, and altogether, the W. D. said, a sovereign would satisfy the trouble he had been put to in the matter, for which he requested a P. O. O.

This, however, Mr. Bunting did not know ; and now, the music of the valse having ceased, Jasper went up in a sort of you-be-off way to Mr. Bunting, and claimed Miss Rosa for the coming quadrille (Jasper couldn't waltz, at least only went round like a cart-wheel, and even that made him sick), and the fair lady and he were presently promenading together, the lady now smiling and smirking, and looking as if it was a regular case of *Perish Savoy!* with regard to Mr. Bunting's feelings. Admiration Jack, however, was on too good terms with himself to imagine it was anything but Rosa's natural kindness of disposition, especially as her great love for waltzing always made her gladly respond to his invitation to become his partner for them, to say nothing of the occasional interpolation of a quadrille—when the figure, the Lancers for instance, was more than the other genius could manage.

And as gentlemen have not the same taste for cutting each other out that ladies have, Miss Rosa passed from one to the other throughout the evening, to the great amusement of the lookers on, who speculated largely on the result—O'Dicey backing Jasper heavily whenever he could get an opportunity ; Miss Flintoff saying Rosa was a little whalebone-hearted thing, who did not deserve to have either ; and many other ladies conspiring to run her down. Even in ringlets, however, she was decidedly the belle of the evening, and for dancing none of them could come near her, though Captain Ambrose Lightfoot did essay to spin his betrothed, Miss Laura Springfield, against her ; yet Rosa held fast, and, guided by Mr. Bunting, distanced them immeasurably.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

And now, we declare, here is old Sir Felix Flexible! Sir Felix, with his star and all complete, bowing and scraping, and acknowledging the marked attention he receives from everybody. Now O'Dicey steps familiarly up to him and slapping him on the shoulder, exclaims, "Holloa, old boy! how goes it? How are Philip of Macedon and all our friends in Greece?" O'Dicey tendering the baronet his hand, who almost involuntarily takes it, before he recognizes his speech-stealing friend at the "Rocks," who, however, the baronet supposes, must be a proper acquaintance as he meets him at a Duke's. So Sir Felix vouchsafes him a little notice, and O'Dicey looks about in hopes that people see it.

First love valse and supper dance! Who shall describe the commotion caused by that announcement? The rushing for partners—the claiming of partners—the evasion of partners. Miss Beauchamp is so sorry, she really thought it was number eleven dance,—would Mr. James Green Foozle kindly excuse her? and then she goes off laughing with Captain Winfield. Now the Jug, who has been nursing a leg very carefully beside Mrs. McDermott, on a magnificent yellow and gold ottoman in the ante-room, suddenly lets it down, and rising offers her his arm, and Miss Rosa is only permitted to valse with Mr. Bunting on condition of surrendering to Jasper the moment it is over. Captain Ambrose Lightfoot claims one Miss Springfield, and young Mr. Netherwood the other; and all the engaged and semi-engaged ones, whom it is needless to enumerate, presently coalesce, and go spinning about like teetotums.

Courtship is something like stag hunting, of which few care to see the finish. The indifferent spectator knows that after the offer comes the church, just as the sportsman knows that the stag will be taken sooner or later—in a pond, a barn, a brickfield, any place that comes uppermost. It is the beginning—the uncarting—that people want to see. Neither is it perhaps necessary for us to follow the guests to the demolition of all the viands we described as getting gathered together, seeing that the whole affair was chronicled in the county papers in a far more accurate form than we can pretend to—

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Mr. Cucumber sketched it out, the Duke filled it in, and the Duchess polished it off.

There used to be a funny fellow in the north of England some time ago, called Billy Purvis, a sort of half-conjurer half play-actor, who found it his interest to occasionally give a performance for the benefit of some charity ; and one day, after exhibiting on behalf of the Newcastle Infirmary, he presented himself to pay over the proceeds to the credit of the institution. The treasurer having counted the cash and thanked Billy for it, chanced to observe, as he was going away, " Perhaps, Mr. Purvis, you would like this to appear in the papers ? " whereupon Billy, turning sharp round and spread-eagleing himself, exclaimed with astonishment, " Papors ! aye te be shu-er. Why, whaat would be the use o' mar givin' it if it wasn't put i' the papors ? " We often think honest Billy's answer accounts for a good deal of the philanthropy of this world. Where would be the use of people doing this or that, if it wasn't put " i' the papors " ?

And so that there might be no mistake about the matter, the Duke always did his own reporting himself, letting the public know when he had a dinner, when he had a dance, when he had a *battue*, when he went from home, when he came back, and when, as in this instance, he had a grand ball. Of course the newspaper people did not sell him, as some of them occasionally do the quack medicine mongers, by putting " Advertisement " at the top of the paragraph ; on the contrary, they let him have the full swing of the paper, as if he was really great " We " himself, a deception that was aided by occasional affectation of ignorance ; as for instance, in giving a list of the guests, His Grace would write " as far as we have been able to learn," or in reporting his own speech, the paper would have it, " the noble Duke spoke nearly as follows," as if the reporter had not been able to catch all he said.

Still, with a little allowance for a certain *couleur de rose* style, the accounts were very accurate, and on an occasion like the present embraced the variety of topics other than the splendour of the ball, such as the pedigree of the Prince, who " We "

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

were sorry to hear was going away; also the cordiality of the Duke; the beauty and affability of the Duchess; the magnificence of the place; the success of the late *battue*; the staunchness of the hounds—winding up with a well-turned eulogium on the advantages of having such an exemplary family resident in the county, and the expression of the decided conviction of great “We,” that such enlarged liberality would be duly remembered at the coming crisis—meaning of course the general election.

“That’s diplomacy,” said the Duke, as, having received the revised account from the Duchess and interpolated the passage about the departure of the Prince, he sealed the missive and dropped it into the letter-box for transmission by post.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER XCIV.

MR. BALLIVANT AGAIN.



UR friend Mr. Bunting was soon enlightened as to the result of the Buntingbury Castle inquiry. The day after the memorable ball, as he was lying in bed feverish with excitement and with the ghost of a tune in his head, he overheard a colloquy between his valet and a voice which he presently recognized as belonging to Mr. Ballivant. Bonville was presently at his bed-side with the ominous name written in the old unmistakeable characters on a small slip of not over-clean paper.

"Ballivant!" gasped Mr. Bunting, feeling that the long-delayed crisis was come at last. "Ballivant," repeated he, dropping the slip of paper down the bed-side—"Show him up stairs—get him the *Times* and tell him I'll be with him directly." So saying, our hero bounded out of bed and extemporised a costume wherein to receive judgment.

"To be or not to be," that was the point thought he as he rushed into his trousers, combed out his whiskers, and frizzed up his hair with both hands. Knotting the silken cord of his cerulean blue dressing-gown hastily around him, he threw open the door in the wooden partition that separated his bed-room from his sitting-room, and stood in the dread presence.

"Sc-cuse my toilette," said he, bowing and advancing to greet him.

"By all means," replied Mr. Ballivant, rising and bowing.

"Have you breakfasted?" asked Mr. Bunting, pointing to the table equipage.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"Many hours since," replied Mr. Ballivant drily, resuming his seat by the fire, and at the same time, diving into his outside coat-pocket for the dread "Daftun."

Mr. Bunting took a chair beside him.

"I've brought back your book," said Mr. Ballivant, producing and presenting it to Mr. Bunting.

"Thank ye," said our nervous hero, receiving it.

"It is an illustration of the truth of the old saying, that if you will allow a man to use figures, he may undertake to prove any thing," observed Mr. Ballivant drily.

"How so ?" asked Mr. Bunting, fearing the answer.

"Because," said Mr. Ballivant, "Mr. Daftun calculates that if he plants a tree it must necessarily grow and be of a certain size at a certain age, regardless of soil, climate, situation, and everything else, whereas nothing can be more fallacious, for the growth of one tree is no criterion for the growth of another, even on the same spot, let alone all the world over."

"Hum," mused Mr. Bunting, feeling it was too true. "Well, then, you think Daftun is wrong," observed Mr. Bunting.

"Certain he's wrong in this case," replied Mr. Ballivant—"Out altogether."

"Dash the Daftun," inwardly growled Bunting—thinking how often he had been thrown over by him. Mr. Bunting now thought he would have his turn, and throw Daftun over.

"Then how about the other property?" asked he, after a short pause.

"The other property is very purty," replied Mr. Ballivant, "very purty for a single man's property, but it would hardly support the requirements of married life—not at least according to the high standard at which expectations are now pitched."

"Not if there's love on both sides?" demanded Mr. Bunting eagerly.

"I think not," said Mr. Ballivant drily, with an ominous shake of his head.

Mr. Bunting gasped for breath.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

"The fact is," said Ballivant, *sotto voce*, "we have two strings to our bow, and can afford to be a little fastidious."

"I see," said Mr. Bunting resignedly.

"Not that I advocate mercenary matches," observed Mr. Ballivant, "but every day's experience shows one the necessity of prudence and caution."

"No doubt," replied Mr. Bunting, "no doubt—only when there is mutual attachment and tolerable sufficiency it seems hard."

"True," rejoined Mr. Ballivant, "true, only sufficiency is a thing that no one has ever been able to define. It is something like riches—a man considers himself rich enough when he has got a little more than he has. People want to begin life where their parents used to end it. Women are educated now solely for the ornamental."

"Well, but am I to understand that all this comes from the young lady herself?" asked Mr. Bunting.

"To a certain extent—to a certain extent," replied Mr. Ballivant. "The fact is, Miss Rosa places herself a good deal in the hands of her Mamma, who consults me, and——" he was going to say, "takes my advice or not as she likes it," but he checked himself at the "and."

"And you think it won't do?" suggested Mr. Bunting.

"I don't say that," replied Mr. Ballivant. "I don't say that—it might do with prudence and economy—in fact, I have known many people marry upon much less, but then this young lady has the option of a great deal more, and——" here he checked himself again.

"Which you'll advise her to take, I suppose," observed Mr. Bunting.

"I don't say that either," replied Mr. Ballivant, "I don't say that either, but——"

"It's a great temptation, I suppose you think," continued Mr. Bunting.

"Undoubtedly it is," assented Mr. Ballivant. "Undoubtedly it is—nobody who scratches so grey a head as I do can be insensible to the advantages of money; but you had better see

PLAIN OR RINGLETS

the ladies themselves—you had better see the ladies themselves,” continued he, “and if you can arrange matters with them, I assure you I shall be quite as happy to draw your settlement as Mr. What’s-his-name.” So saying, our visitor arose, and tendering his hand withdrew, leaving our unhappy hero transfixed with depression. Mr. Ballivant made the descent of the tortuous staircase, regained his vehicle, was shut in with a loud slam of the door, and a shout of “right!” from sore-eyed Sam, while the sound of the wheels had died out in the distance ere he awoke to a full consciousness of his situation.

“I’ll go and see them myself,” at length muttered he, ringing the bell for his breakfast, and, ordering a horse to be got ready immediately, he commenced the to and fro operation of eating and dressing at the same time. Having gulped a cup of coffee, and accomplished a half *negligé* toilette, careless cravat with dejected collars, but assiduous coat, waistcoat and trousers, he mounted Puffing Billy, and was presently urging him along at a pace that by no means comported with the horse’s infirmities. In due time he arrived at Privett Grove.

Mrs. McDermott had anticipated his coming, and was on the watch to receive him. No castle no courtship being her fixed resolution, she greeted him kindly, but quite in the close-the-account style. After a little talk about the ball, she at once led up to the subject, by expressing her high opinion of Mr. Bunting’s character, manners, and acquirements, but candidly stated that both Mr. Ballivant and she were greatly (cough) disappointed at the (hem) result of their inquiries; and Mr. Bunting knowing well where the shoe pinched, durst not try to combat the point. Chalker and Charger’s, and Biter and Co.’s bills, rose up in judgment against him.

“But you had better see Rosa herself,” continued Mrs. McDermott, thinking to shift the responsibility on her daughter; and Mr. Bunting, glad to escape the now austere lady, readily sought the solace of Rosa’s charms.

He found her in the drawing-room, elegantly attired in a new blue silk dress, with a plurality of small flounces, and either with a view of still holding him on, or from a desire of leaving

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

a favourable impression, she had her hair plain as it was on the eventful Pic Nic day, instead of in the Ringlets she had lately worn. Mr. Bunting at first looked upon this as a favourable omen, but our prudent young lady soon gave him to understand that though she had the highest opinion of him, and should ever think of him with the greatest esteem and regard, and hoped they would long remain friends; yet she would not think of acting contrary to her beloved Mamma's wishes. *Perish Savoy!* if she would. And not all the vows he made, or the sentiment he could muster, seemed to have the slightest effect upon her resolution.

Mamma, however, having timed them pretty accurately, came in just as, having exhausted his arguments, he was invoking poetry to his aid, when ringing for cake and wine, she sat down to her needlework—the old Baden-Baden towel again—as if she meant to remain; and when that is the case the sooner the suitor goes the better. So without any extra formality our friend took leave, and just as he regained the gate who should come up but the Jug—the Jug in a bran new hat, blue frock coat, and fancy vest, with a mauve coloured tie, and mauve coloured kid gloves, mounted on Billy Rough'un, with Billy Button in a blue and yellow livery riding behind him. The Jug turned nearly mauve colour himself, for the day was chilly, and he had taken a stiffish glass of brandy to brace himself, which, coupled with his natural rubicund hue, worked upon by a guilty conscience, contributed to the effect. Mr. Boyston was much embarrassed, for he was just going to qualify, as he thought, to be Mr. Bunting's stepfather, and ought perhaps to be saying something facetious on the subject, whereas poor Mr. Bunting was in reality going away, and would gladly have avoided the collision; so after sundry splutters at each other, and nearly knocking their horses' heads together in their anxiety to get out of each other's way, they passed and proceeded on their respective routes—Boyston for Elysium, Bunting for Burton St. Leger.

Arrived at home, he indignantly thrust his "Daftun" into the fire, and summoning Bonville, desired him to prepare for

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

instant departure. He resolved to go down into Renfrewshire and get rid of a property that brought him in nothing but grief and annoyance. Cushion it as he would the castle would always rise up against him, and then when people had deceived themselves they talked and blamed Mr. Bunting, as if he had done it. He would be off and done with it; and Mons. Bonville having no predilections for Burton St. Leger—on the contrary, thought it a very uncivilised, unbilliard-tabled sort of place—readily seconded the motion, and presently had the valuable wardrobe in marching order; it being much easier to make a total flit than to pick and choose for a journey.

Crop, the groom, was ordered to return to town with the horses; but that worthy having succeeded in supplanting Sore-eyed Sam with Rebecca Mary, intimated his intention of retiring from service altogether, and taking the Malt Shovel Inn, which was then becoming vacant; whereupon Mr. Bunting most generously presented him with the valuable animals, which Welter the blacksmith declared when Crop took them to him to shoe that it would be like robbing Crop to put shoes upon for they really weren't worth it. But whether they were worth shoeing or not they appeared to have been very expensive keeping, for Matty Muldoon, with the aid of his "missis," sent our hero up a bill that would do credit to Chousey himself. And having at length discharged all the obligations of life, Mr. Bunting again availed himself of Dr. Catcheyside's carriage, in which he reached the railway station in a very different frame of mind to that in which he had left it.

The first intimation Miss Rosa had of the departure was receiving in a pink-lined envelope the familiar lines, beginning,

"Lovely Rose, farewell!

If ever fondest prayer for other's weal availed on high,

Mine shall not all be lost in air, but waft thy name beyond the sky," &c., &c.

But as the envelope gave no address, Miss Rosa was unable to return Mr. Bunting a beautiful pearl and amethyst ring he had given her—which, however, indeed she rather preferred keeping.



Mr. Bunting, rejected.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

CHAPTER XCV.

MR. BALLIVANT ON RACING.



R. BUNTING being now clear of the premises, Mrs. McDermott had ample opportunity of running him down, and expatiating on the providential escape dear Rosa had had from a penniless adventurer old enough to be her father. And ill-natured stories being at a premium, several accommodating gossips who could talk on either side, contributed their quota to the undervaluation. Altogether they made him out to be a very bad man, a shocking bad man, in fact. Meanwhile Mrs. Goldspink and Mrs. McDermott kept up such a friendly intercourse that it was not long before Mr. Ballivant was wanted again. Rosa had brought the young banker to book, and there was a little preliminary arrangement to be done. The Jug, too, was ardent, especially on non-hunting days, and altogether matters were hastening to a climax.

Mr. Ballivant was one of the Ale order of lawyers, and united a little of the milk of human kindness with the stern leaven of the law. He had lived through the rise and growth of the present struggle for station, and did not consider great wealth and happiness altogether synonymous. Moreover, he was not particularly fond of old Sivin-and-four, still less of our young friend Jasper, whom he looked upon as a very idle boy. So when Mrs. McDermott broached the cause of Mr. Ballivant's coming, which indeed he knew pretty well without her telling, he made such a strong representation of the danger and profligacy of the turf, that he quite frightened Mamma as

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

to the consequences. He would not advise her to let her daughter marry any one who had anything to do with it, certainly not a banker, who had such unlimited means of obtaining money—many people seeming to think it quite a favour for a man who issued five pounds to take it. And his arguments were so forcible that she quite came into Mr. Ballivant's view of the matter, and commissioned him to see and talk with young Plutus on the subject—not to say any thing harsh, but to reason him out of it if he could—put it upon Rosa and her, if Mr. Ballivant liked.

And Ballivant being thus armed, and having his chay at the door, forthwith proceeded to Mayfield, where he soon found Jasper engaged in his favourite game of skittles, with Tailings the turfite, at the Bear and Ragged Staff Inn. Having sent the barmaid into the skittle-ground to say that a gentleman wished to see Mr. Goldspink in the "Moon," Mr. Ballivant patiently awaited Jasper's coming, which he was not long in doing, a summons from a stranger being rather unusual with him; and Jasper, half thinking it might be O'Dicey, who had promised to look him up the first time he was passing. Finding a lesser evil than he expected, he greeted Mr. Ballivant with the warmth of a repriever, saying he was very glad to see him, and asked if he would take any refreshment—a glass of sherry and a biscuit, or anything of that sort.

Mr. Ballivant having declined his proffered hospitality, was presently button-holing him with "Well, now, I dare say you know what I have come about, the matter of your marriage, in fact. Well, then, you know I have nothing to do with your looks, or your manners, or your figure, or anything of that sort, the ladies will please themselves on these points; but there is one thing I must strenuously urge and impress upon you, and that is your immediate withdrawal from the turf."

"Why so?" exclaimed our surprised hero, thinking it was rather a fine thing to be connected with it.

"Because," replied Mr. Ballivant, "it is a dangerous pursuit, and draws you into low profligate company."

"I don't see that," said Jasper, biting his thick lips.



JASPER ENGAGED IN HIS FAVOURITE GAME.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

"Well, but I do," rejoined Mr. Ballivant; "and if Mrs. McDermott takes my advice she will not let her daughter marry any man who has anything to do with it. Gambling and drinking are two insurmountable objections to matrimony, in my mind."

"Humph," mused Jasper, thinking Mr. Ballivant alluded to his O'Dicey performance. "I don't think there is anything objectionable about the turf," at length observed he.

"Well, but I do," rejoined Mr. Ballivant, "I do; and I've lived a good deal longer in the world than you, and seen more of it, and I'll tell you what, I have never seen a low fellow get a gentleman into his power, without his sooner or later making him repent it."

Jasper was silent. Tailings was evidently the object of the observation.

"If gentlemen," continued Mr. Ballivant, warming with his subject, "think to ingratiate themselves with the lower orders by affecting undue familiarity they greatly deceive themselves—the lower orders respect a man in proportion as he respects himself, and there is nothing they dislike so much as to see a man who ought to occupy the position of a gentleman demeaning himself by low associates."

"Tailings, evidently," gasped Jasper, half inclined to resent the observation.

"It is not only the degradation, but the danger," continued his monitor. "These creatures keep everything they can get hold of that they think may ever by any possibility be turned to account, and years after an incautious note or letter may be produced with which you may be twitted and taunted nobody knows how."

"But you would not put down racing, surely!" exclaimed our sporting hero.

"Well, no," replied Mr. Ballivant, "I don't say that, but there can be no possible occasion for you or I to support it. Leave it to noblemen and gentlemen who have a direct interest in breeding good horses; but avoid the betting blackleg tribe as you would a pestilence."

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

“However,” continued Mr. Ballivant, resting his formidable looking spectacles on to his broad forehead, and taking a good stare at Jasper, “those are my instructions—money matters I will arrange with your father, but upon this turf business I must be firm and peremptory. I never knew any good come of it. I have known a great deal of ill. I never see a young man setting up a metallic pencilled pocket-book, and sneaking round a street corner into what is miscalled a sporting house, without feeling that sooner or later he will be ruined—ruined—mind, body, credit, and estate. It is only a question of time. If you want healthy excitement,” continued he, “why not hunt? That’s a pleasant, gentlemanly amusement. No man is more respected than Mr. Jovey Jessop, but you never hear of Mr. Jovey Jessop bellowing for odds, or scheming how to get money out of his neighbour’s pocket. People like to send their sons out with Mr. Jessop, because they know they’ll take no harm; but as to the turf, as the turf is at present constituted—its vice, its depravities, its atrocities,—I really think a man had almost better be under it than on it.” So saying, Mr. Ballivant clutched off his spectacles, and wheeled round for his broad-brimmed hat, as he cased and put the spectacles into his breast-coat-pocket.

“Well now, then,” said he, preparing to depart, “you’ll be good enough to think over what I have said to you; it is with the wish and consent of the ladies, and that being the case, I’m quite sure it will be attended to.” So saying, he tendered our hero his hand, and was presently back at the Hare and Hounds Inn, ordering his fly, wherein to return home. And Jasper, thinking that Mr. Bunting was still to the fore, and having tasted the sweets of jealousy already, was obliged to attend to what was said.

PLAIN OR RINGLET'S ?

CHAPTER XCVI.

WHO-HOOP !



The Finish.

ADIES are much more at home in the matter of matrimony than men. It seems to come to them quite naturally, whereas the men are generally rather shame-faced, and wish it well over. No one ever sees boys blowing off dandelion-down to try who is to be married first. A pair of top-boots has generally more attraction for them. All ladies have a wonderful tendency towards the orange-blossom. It is quite the fox's brush of female life. They like the fuss, the excitement, the shopping, the choosing, the matching, the ordering. One would think

a bride had either had no clothes before, or was going to an uninhabited island where they were not to be got, so vast and comprehensive is the assortment. Then when the garments are gathered together, how the ladies come trotting to see the grand *trousseau*, just as interesting, we should think, as looking at a lot of well-littered horses standing in a stable in their clothes. But the fair see beauty in the frail devices, and think how elegant they will look when filled up with such a splendid figure as the bride's.

Then, as the happy day approaches, what anxiety there is about the weather. It is, perhaps, the only time when ladies really do care what sort of a day it is. They think of the bride

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

and her beautiful dress, and her beautiful veil, her beautiful this and her beautiful that, and of the distance she will have to go from the carriage to the church.

Somehow weddings are generally favoured with fine weather—and we are happy in being able to state that our heroine and Mamma were especially fortunate in theirs. A spring morning's sun awoke all parties to their duties, causing even the men to forego their objurgations at thus having a day spoiled—and cease their wonders at weddings not being in the afternoon. It certainly would be a great convenience if they were.

Punctual to a minute, Mr. Jovey Jessop had his Jug and his traps, boot-jack and all, in his dog-cart, and after an affectionate leave of the servants, who all agreed that Mr. Boyston was a very quiet gentleman who gave no trouble, Jovey set off with him as if driving to the meet of the hounds.

There seemed to be a general holiday throughout the country, and every house and cottage exhibited some little token of rejoicing, a flag, a streamer, a ribbon; some out of compliment to Mr. Jessop, some out of compliment to the Jug, some on account of the beef and ale they were going to have at Appleton Hall in honour of the event. As they neared Sleekfield turnpike-gate, they overtook one of those wretched attempts at finery, a job-carriage and four—the carriage a lack-lustre landaulet, the horses three blind 'uns and a bolter, the tawdry post-boys as unmatchable as the horses. Jovey and Jug gave a view-halloa as they passed, and then let the inmates—Jasper and his worthy parents—see how much faster one good horse could go than four bad ones. So they arrived at Privett Grove in time to discard their wraps, and appear in much the same dresses as they did at the Duchess's ball. Then the whole house presently broke out in an irruption of white—white dresses, white waistcoats, white gloves, white favors, white everything. Rosa looked lovely, and Mamma wore her years quite as well as she does in our frontispiece. Indeed some of the gentlemen thought they would just as soon be the Jug as friend Jasper. And all being punctual and pleasant, the carriages were soon filled with crinoline, the gentlemen got

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

into their various devices, whips cracked, wheels went round, while road-side bobbing and curtseying was again the order of the day. And the distance to Priestpoppo church was either so short, or they went so fast that they seemed to be getting out of the carriages again before they had well got in. Some, indeed, thought they might as well have walked. For such a lasting ceremony, it takes a very short time to perform, and Mamma and Miss had both changed their names in the course of twenty minutes. Then the brides and bridegrooms, having received the congratulations of their friends, paired off together, a different arrangement had to be made with the carriages, which was effected at the church gates amid a salvo of silver among the by-standers. Then the return journey being rapidly made, the elegant breakfast was found ready, and the ladies had to be rechristened with a shower of champagne. Mrs. Boyston, your very good health ! Mr. Boyston, yours ! Mrs. Jasper Goldspink, your very good health ! Mr. Jasper, yours, &c.

Then Sivin-and-four, and Mrs. Sivin-and-four's healths were drunk, and Sivin-and-four, unused to champagne, being rather elated, returned thanks in a dribbling speech, in which he told them how he had begun life very small, and how he was now a most substantial man, and advised everybody to stick to the shop if they wished the shop to stick to them, adding, that if they took care of the pence the pounds would take care of themselves, with other familiar sayings that we need not repeat. And the six bridesmaids and Mr. Jovey Jessop being duly toasted, and responded to by Mr. Jessop, who spoke most handsomely on behalf of both them and his Jug, the ladies presently withdrew, the brides to rearrange their toilets, the bridesmaids to see to the derangements of theirs ; whereupon the gentlemen proceeded to empty the bottles, and drink the "single married, and the married happy," and finished by toasting the Jug and Jasper a second time. Then the carriages again appeared in the ring before the house, while the cording and bumping of boxes sounded in the passage, and the Jug withdrew to put on his boots, asking pretty

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

Perker, the maid, whom he met on the stairs, if Mrs. McDermott was ready? which Perker said was a bad omen. Mrs. Boyston answered the question by appearing in person, dressed in a beautiful pink bonnet with a white feather tipped with pink, and a brown moire antique dress with brown velvet round the bottom, when the gallant Jug, having saluted her, helped her into her black velvet jacket, and then leaving her, said he would be ready in a minute. And when he returned he found Rosa—we beg pardon, Mrs. Jasper Goldspink—getting admired in her white Maltese lace bonnet with small white roses and orange-flower buds, and her well set out light lavender coloured silk dress surmounted by a large black Maltese lace mantle. The Jug with his hat being the signal for a move, there was presently a great hugging and kissing, with a slight show of tears, and then the respective parties got into their carriages and away, the Boystons to White Rock House, the Goldspinks for the Dovecote Lane Station. And as the carriages departed, the half-fuddled, full-dressed gentlemen yawned and looked at their watches wondering what they should do with themselves.

The day was done. Privett Grove was closed, Mr. Jovey Jessop drove home alone, and our Banker and his spouse set off for their quiet quarters at Mayfield in a one horse chaise.

“Sivin and four’s elivin, and sivin’s eighteen, I don’t know but I’d as soon the mother hadn’t married,” observed our man of money to his wife, as they jolted along.

“Oh, never mind, we can’t have it all as we want,” replied Mrs. Goldspink, “the money is sure to come sooner or later, and there will always be Garlandale for them to go to if they don’t like the Grove.”

“Sivin and four’s elivin, and sivinteen is twenty-eight, money’s very useful in this world for all that,” replied the Banker, whipping the old horse into a trot that presently brought them on to the rising ground overlooking their own familiar town, spire, town-hall, corn-market, and all.

PLAIN OR RINGLET?

CHAPTER XCVII.

WHO-HOOP AGAIN!



OUR esteemed friend *Punch* says there are two things a man never forgets—his first love and his first cigar, to which we beg leave to add a third, namely, when he first heard that his banker had stopped payment. His banker stopped payment! What an appalling announcement! What a crash and commotion it creates in the country! How it spreads, re-echoes, and reverberates, catching men in all sorts of ways; by sea, by land, by rail, on foot, on horseback, in their castles, in their counting-houses, seizing them in the side, depriving them of breath, freezing their feet, petrifying their faculties, almost stunning them with fear. They never forget where they first heard it, nor the way in which they stood gasping, calculating the consequences, considering how they would be hit, whether Fothergill's bill would have been paid in, Crossgrain's cheque presented, and how they should meet their own engagements. That recollection haunts them to the last, long after the adorable first love shall have subsided in a front, and the fume of the cigar become second nature. It was thought at one time that a discovery had been made for preventing all bank failures in future, and certainly, looking at joint-stock banking in a theoretical point of view, nothing can be more specious or plausible, though in reality nothing is more fallacious, the whole depending upon whether the directors are honest, and whether the proprietors are princes or paupers. So far from mitigating the evil, it has increased it tenfold, in consequence of the magnitude of the operations. And yet

PLAIN OR RINGLET'S ?

people go into them with all the confidence of security—believing the specious reports, and the existence of the mythical guarantee fund. Talk of the courage of facing an enemy, or Cardigan-izing a cannon,—what are such exploits compared to the courage of a man who deliberately risks his all in a concern over which he has no more control than he would over a run-away steam engine ?

So long as the beloved ten per cent. came rolling regularly in, all was right, and no questions were asked ; nothing could be better than the Dib-shire Joint-Stock Bank, and when word came that it had what is mildly called “closed,” parties wouldn’t believe it—must be a mistake—somebody had been late with a cheque, which, of course, couldn’t be paid, and it would be all right to-morrow. Why, it was open only yesterday, with its bright doors, shining counters, and goodly array of sleek clerks weighing and shovelling sovereigns about as if it was too much trouble to count them. But when the morrow came, and the blinds were down, the sovereigns silent, and an ominous notice—short, but most potent—on the closed doors, then indeed came weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Banks of issue interest the public according to the number of dirty five-pound notes in circulation, and as people always make the greatest noise about small sums, the failure of a bank of issue almost creates as great a consternation as the suspension of a joint-stock bank. Every man who has a five-pound note joins in the cry. Still, if ever there was a safe bank in the world, one would think it was old Goldspink’s—established sivinteen hundred and sivinty-four—and worked with a caution that almost amounted to cruelty. No overdrawing—no interest allowed on deposit, no discounting without most approved names. O’Dicey might have waited a long while before they would have befriended any of either his or Mr. Wanless’s paper.

In troublous times, indeed, a very trifling thing causes a panic, and makes a run upon a bank. During the great bubble year of 1825-6, a bank in the city was ruined in consequence of a butcher’s pony falling down before the door just at the time of the high change, and the public mistaking the crowd gathered

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

round the pony for a run upon the establishment. A rumour was raised, and a real run took place the next day. We are sorry to say that nearly as frivolous a cause produced as great an effect upon the old Mayfield Bank.

The reader will remember that Mr. Ballivant had insisted upon our friend Jasper's retirement from the turf, and by way of furthering the arrangement, had mentioned to one or two people that Jasper's race-horse Garlandale was for sale. Among others he told it to Mr. Kirby the veterinary surgeon, who told it to his cousin Armstrong the auctioneer, who, mistaking the "horse" for the house, asked Cordey Brown, mysteriously, what had happened that the Banker's new place Garlandale was for sale. Cordey asked Jobling, and Jobling asked Talford the tipler, until the report reached Archey Ellenger's ears, who, hitting off the idea that there was something wrong at the bank, went about the country asking what was up, and intimating that people had better be looking after their money, for that Garlandale Hall, as he called it, was for sale, and wishing that this marriage mightn't be arranged for the purpose of making matters safe.

The news spread like wild-fire ! Archey's suggestion speedily assumed the dimensions of a fact—Brown White told Bowderoukins that young Hopeful had been at his old games again, Bowderoukins told Meadowcroft that he supposed there was something wrong at Mayfield, Meadowcroft gave Captain Cambo a hint that all wasn't right at the old bank, and Cambo told Mrs. Cambo, who told somebody else ; people ran to their money-boxes to see if they had any of the familiar notes with a fat ox feeding at a hay-rick on the top, and the mark of many thumbings at the corner. The more the marriage was talked about the more the story circulated, until it culminated on the very wedding-day. As our Banker and his spouse neared the town of Mayfield, they were passed by several parties, unaccustomed to be there on non-market-days, who looked at him very differently to what they did when they came to ask for a little accommodation.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivinteen's twenty-eight—there

PLAIN OR RINGLET'S ?

seems to be a great many people astir to-day," observed our friend, seeing more travellers in advance.

"Going to give us a welcome, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Goldspink, as the bells of St. Margaret's church now struck up a merry peal.

The numbers increased—foot people, horse people, gig people, all hurrying onward—but not dressed in their Sunday clothes, nor looking particularly amiable, wearing much the same sort of aspect that farmers do when the "other-side" candidate comes into the market-place to canvass them.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivity-sivin is eighty-eight—they seem very sour, wonder what's happened," mused our friend, as they now passed Jackey Brown and Cuthbert Donaldson, both of whom had recently had accommodation at the bank, and yet scarcely vouchsafed him a look—let alone a touch of the hat.

The Goldspinks had now got off the macadam of the road on to the uneven cobble stone pavement of the partially grass-grown streets, at the corners of which groups of people were collected in earnest conversation, many of whom gave significant nudges and glances as he jingled up, evidently showing that he had been the subject of their discussion.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and ninety-nine's a 'underd and ten—never saw people so sullen before," observed our Banker, as he passed a group who scarcely deigned him a recognition. As he drove on, people followed the same way, and on getting into the market-place he found a crowd outside the bank-door clustering like a swarm of bees at a hive-mouth—all scrambling and fighting to be in.

"Sivin and four's elivin, and sivin 'underd and sivin is sivin 'underd and eighteen—do believe there's a run on the bank! Whatever can have happened," gasped he, driving rapidly up to the house door, hurrying out his wife, and consigning the carriage to the care of the first passing countryman. He was in and through the house and into the bank in a minute. Then as he entered a Babel-like confusion of tongues arose, mingled with hisses and cheers, and derisive appellations, and the

PLAIN OR RINGLETS?

flourishing of dirty five-pound notes from equally dirty hands. The perspiring Scorer, the cashier, with an imposing wedding-favor on his breast, now turned and implored his master to mount the counter and endeavour to pacify the crowd, at the same time giving him a hoist up as he spoke.

"Sivin and four's elivin," ejaculated the Banker from his eminence.

"Nothin' o' the sort roared Busby the baker, "two fi'-pun notes!" flourishing them as he spoke.

"What's the matter?" demanded the Banker.

"Wants our money!" cried half a dozen voices.

"You shall have it," replied the Banker firmly.

"Out with it then!" cried several.

"Can't pay you all at once," replied the Banker.

"Nicely, if you like," rejoined several.

"You've been puttin' of your money away, you old scoundrel!" exclaimed a voice from the midst of the closely wedged crowd.

"Hooray for the old vagabond," shouted another; "we'll have him hung at the next Assizes."

"Rot ye, you're such a bitter old bad 'un that if you were boiled into broth the devil wouldn't sup you!" exclaimed Rippon the rag man, holding up a dirty five pound note as he spoke.

"Just the man to rob a church, and not keep a prayer-book for his self!" roared Bagshot the besom-maker—from Rippon's side.

"You bloated aristocrat, you deserve to be drowned!" yelled Nat Skittles the pedestrian whistler, who was star-ing it through the country.

"Come, old Ten-and-a-half per Cent., out with the tin!" cried Cordey Brown the butcher, putting his hand to his mouth as he spoke.

Then the hubbub increased, those who held notes wanting to be in, those who had got gold wanting to be out; and this kept going on, more or less violently, until every sovereign and Bank of England note was absorbed—when the old-established

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

bank — established sivinteen 'underd and sivinty-four — was obliged to succumb, and this owing to parties mistaking the name of a " horse " for that of a house, showing

" What mighty contests rise from trivial things,"

as Mr. Pope sings.

A country marriage is a local thing, and, unless parties advertise themselves in the London papers, is generally confined to its own district ; but a bank breaking is food for every newspaper in the land, and our friend Mr. Bunting soon read of it at his highland home—where the reader will be happy to hear that the barrenness of the surface of his property is amply atoned for by the richness of the minerals below, prodigious beds of iron-stone, coal, and lime being found on the spot.

Mr. Bunting's first impression was to throw himself—minerals and all—at Miss Rosa's feet ; second thoughts, however, suggested that the ladies had been rather mercenary in the matter, and before he could arrive at any satisfactory conclusion the announcement of the marriages in the *Times* dissipated the delusion. He then saw through it all as clearly as possible, and required no Adolphe Didier or any ingenious invention to assist him. He wrote to the Jug, congratulating him on his marriage, and sending him copies of a Prospectus of a Joint-Stock Company for working his Royalties, the Company having, by a curious coincidence, the very same W. D. who twice thwarted Mr. Bunting's matrimonial efforts, for Secretary. The W. D. now says that Mr. Bunting will be one of the richest men in Scotland, and can build a Castle or whatever he likes.

Garlandale, both house and horse, have been sold, and our substantial man considerably reduced in his circumstances. Jasper and Rosa live between the old people and Mamma's, illustrating the truth of the old saying, that there never yet was a house built big enough to hold two families. Perker carries war into whichever establishment she enters, and sadly laments the hero of the scarf. She thinks Admiration Jack was much

PLAIN OR RINGLETS ?

more of a "quality gentleman" than Jasper, and feels that she was completely defrauded of Bonville the valet. Jasper had no valet to offer her, only Tom Tailings, a low fellow, whom she wouldn't take if it was ever so.

The Jug, we are sorry to say, is not so comfortable as we could wish. Mrs. Boyston stints him of his drink, won't let him dine in his slippers, and wants him to make Billy Rough'un go in the coal-cart. She also threatens him with the terrors of Sir Cresswell for desertion and cruelty—beating her on the preterpluperfect part of her person with his boot-jack. Altogether the Jug has made a bad investment, and we should not be surprised to hear of his being back at Appleton Hall to cut out Archey Ellenger, who has applied for the situation of Jug.

So Miss Rosa had better have kept her hair "Plain" than put it in "Ringlets," as the gipsy's prophecy was not fulfilled after all.

THE END.

A List of the various Volumes containing
PICTURES AND SKETCHES from "PUNCH,"
with Specimens of their Contents ; all in
Elegant Bindings. And other publications.

London : Bradbury, Agnew, & Co. Ltd.,
10, Bouverie Street, E.C.

PICTURES FROM "PUNCH."

A selected Collection of Sketches from all the Artists who have contributed to "PUNCH" from 1841 to 1895.

Complete in Six Volumes, Demy 4to, price 6s. each in cloth;

ALSO

In Three Double Volumes, elegantly half-bound in leather with linen sides, price 10s. 6d. each.

** The Collection of PICTURES and SKETCHES in this Series numbers nearly 2,500 in all, and makes a handsome set of Volumes in either binding.



SO FRIVOLOUS!

Wife. "SOLOMON, I HAVE A BONE TO PICK WITH YOU."
Solomon (*flippantly*). "WITH PLEASURE, MY DEAR, SO LONG AS IT'S A FUNNY BONE!"

JOHN LEECH.

PICTURES
OF
LIFE AND CHARACTER

(A COMPLETE COLLECTION)

From "PUNCH."

By JOHN LEECH.

In Three Fine Royal 4to Volumes, elegantly bound in cloth gilt,
price 10s. 6d. each.

*** This Collection comprises the whole of JOHN LEECH'S PICTURES of a social character which have appeared in "PUNCH," and numbers in all 3,000 Sketches.



AN ANXIOUS MOMENT.

"DON'T MOVE THERE, WE SHALL CLEAR YOU!"

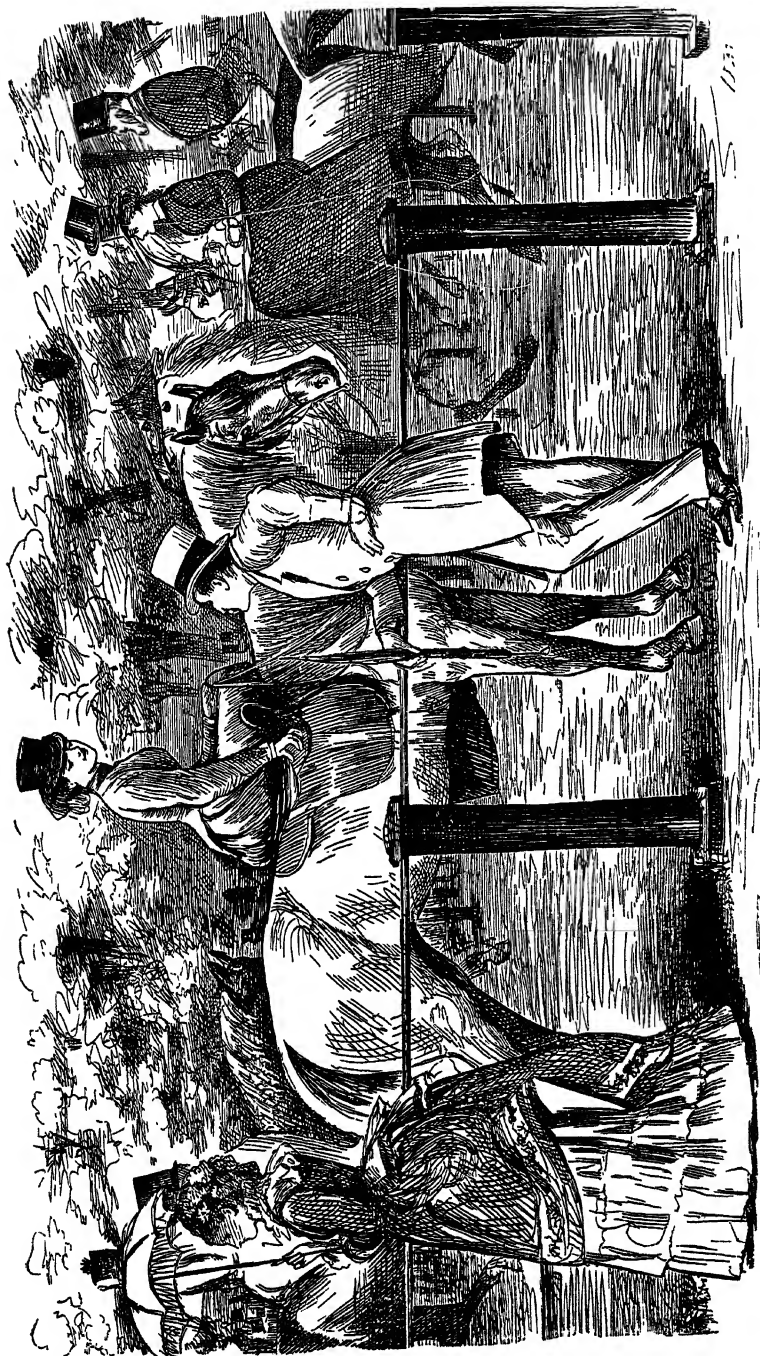
SOCIETY PICTURES

From "PUNCH."

By GEORGE DU MAURIER.

Very elegantly printed on a super-calendered toned paper in uniformity with the Artist's style, and making Two handsome Royal 4to Volumes, chastely bound with leather back and cloth sides, price 12s. 6d. each.

** The PICTURES in this handsome Collection, many of them full-page and containing the choicest representations of the Artist's skill, number in all nearly 1,000.



WHAT LONDON CRUSHES ARE COMING TO.

"BY THE BYE, LADY CROWDER, HAVE YOU MET THE PARTINGTONS LATELY?"

"NOT FOR AN AGE! THEY WERE AT MY BALL LAST NIGHT, BUT I DIDN'T SEE THEM. HAPPEN TO BE THERE, CAPTAIN SMYTHE?"

BY THE WAY, DID YOU
"SO GLAD!"

CHARLES KEENE.

PICTURES OF OUR PEOPLE

From "PUNCH."

By CHARLES KEENE.

A fine Super Royal 4to Volume, with the Pictures printed on a plate paper. Bound in silk grained cloth, gilt edges, price 21s.

** This Collection contains an admirable selection of Sketches illustrative of the Artist's humour, and displaying to the full his well-known ability as an Artist in Black and White.



"SORRY HE SPOKE."

Bulky Old Gent (making the twelfth inside). "PHEW! DREADFULLY STUFFY THESE 'BUSSES!"
Strong-minded Slim Lady (severely). "WE DID NOT REMARK IT TILL YOU CAME IN, SIR!"

MR. PUNCH'S BOOK OF ARMS.

Drawn and Written by E. T. REED.

The Drawings are finely printed on a laid antique paper, with good margins and hand-cut edges. Bound in vellum antique, Demy 4to, price 7s. 6d. net.

** Of the three separate Collections of Mr. Reed's highly humorous Drawings from "Punch" this Volume is the only one now to be had; the preceding Volumes, "Prehistoric Peeps" and "Mr. Punch's Animal Land," being out of print.



Henry, first Baron Haversham of Eryham
Fairleigh and Sentensham.

A LEGEND OF CAMELOT :

PICTURES, POEMS, ETC.

By GEORGE DU MAURIER.

A handsome oblong Royal 4to Volume, printed "de luxe" on a fine-toned plate paper, and bound in art canvas, gilt edges, price 12s. 6d.

* * * This Volume contains, in addition to the Pictures, the Verses contributed by the Artist to accompany them. The same ability is revealed in them as was displayed later in his highly successful story of "Trilby."

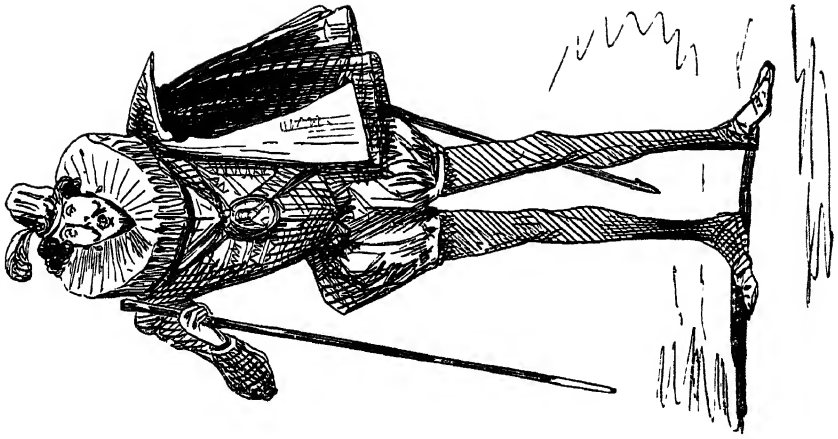


THE LIONS OF THE EVENING.

G. A. A'BECKETT'S
COMIC HISTORIES
OF
ENGLAND AND ROME.

Having 30 Steel Engravings by JOHN LEECH, all coloured by hand,
and 300 Woodcut Illustrations, in Three Volumes, Medium 8vo,
price 9s. each.

**. This New Edition of these well-known Volumes, wherein the facts of history are related in a narrative brightened with wit and humour, is produced in a new large type, and printed on a laid antique paper with wide margins.



LORD DARNLEY.



QUEEN MARY'S ELOPEMENT.

THE COMIC BLACKSTONE.

By G. A. A'BECKETT.

A New Edition, revised and enlarged by A. W. A'BECKETT.

With numerous Illustrations, of which several are full-page Pictures
printed in colours, price 9s.

*** The same originality of wit and humour which is exhibited in the Comic Histories is in this Volume equally fully displayed by the Author, who was a London Magistrate and one of the earliest of the writers in "Punch."



THE ABSOLUTE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS AS EXPERIENCED
BY THE LITIGANT.

FOX RUSSELL.

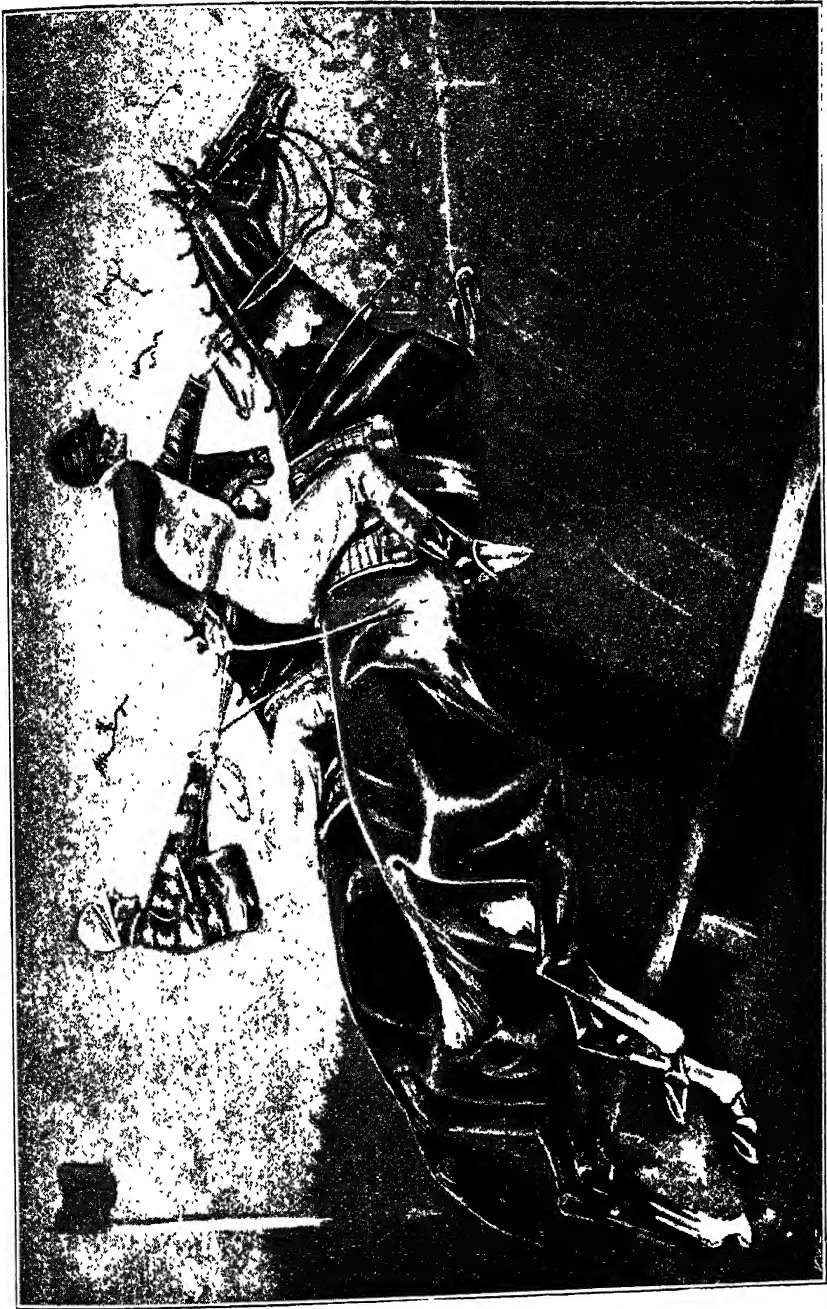
A FINELY-ILLUSTRATED SPORTING NOVEL.

THE HAUGHTYSHIRE HUNT.

By FOX RUSSELL.

Illustrated by R. J. RICHARDSON with some admirable Sporting Sketches of high finish, of which Sixteen are full-page Pictures printed on art board, and the others appear in the text. Uniform in size with the M. F. H. Edition of the "HANDLEY CROSS" Series, price 14s.

* * "THE HAUGHTYSHIRE HUNT" is a capital novel of the 'Handley Cross' type which will be considered not unworthy to take rank with that celebrated series. The Illustrations by Mr Richardson are numerous and well reproduced, indeed, the whole book will be as pleasurable to possess as it is to read."—*Sporting Notes*.



At the Last Fence.

FOX RUSSELL.

NEW ILLUSTRATED SPORTING NOVEL.

COLONEL BOTCHERBY, M. S. H.

By FOX RUSSELL.

Illustrated by R. J. RICHARDSON with some spirited Sporting Sketches of high finish, of which Sixteen are full-page Pictures printed on art board, and the others appear in the text, price 14s.

* This Volume is by the Author of "THE HAUGHTYSHIRE HUNT," and is uniform therewith. It reveals the same vivid acquaintance with the humours of the hunting field dexterously depicted.



The Colonel's Triumph.

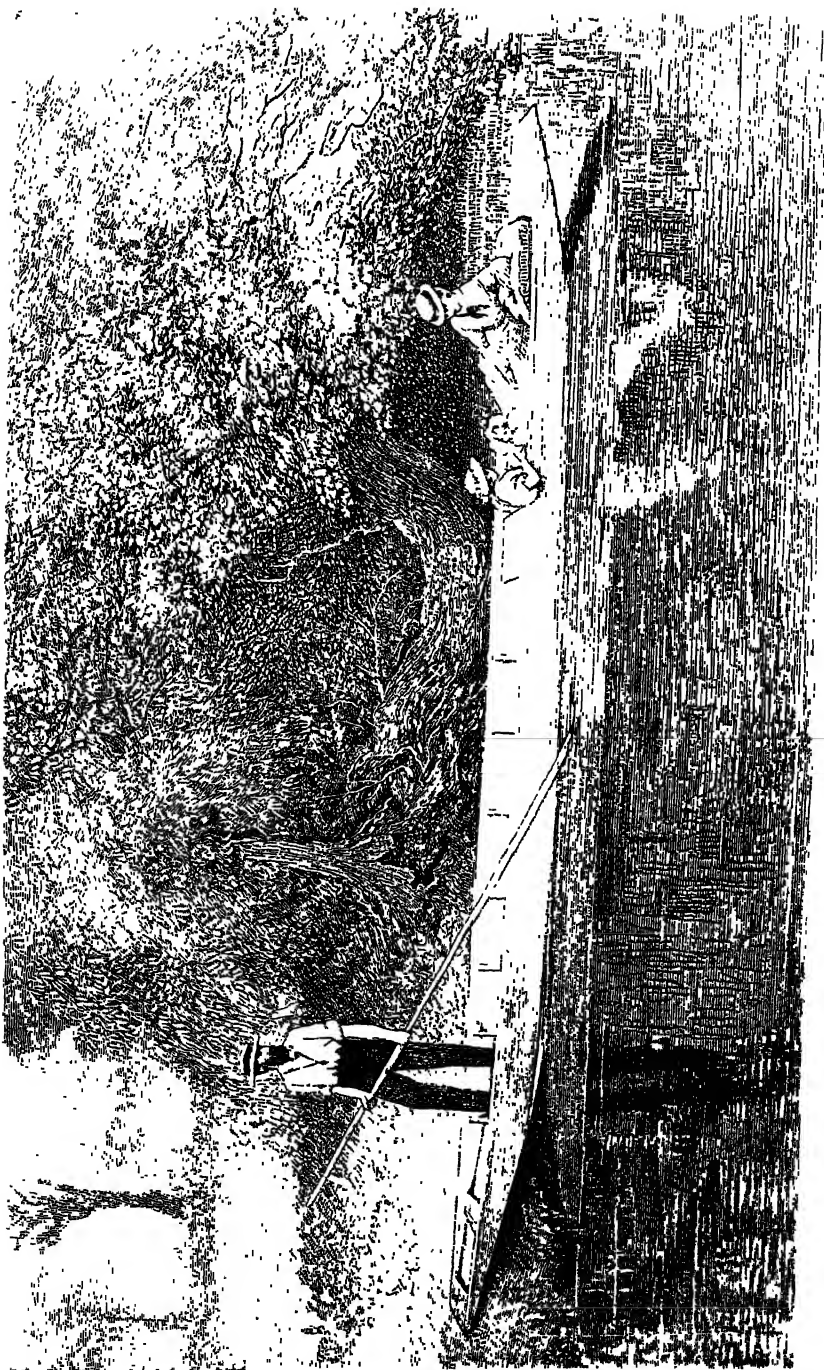
OUR RIVER.

AN ARTIST'S LIFE ON THE RIVER THAMES.

By G. D. LESLIE, R.A.

With Fifty very fine Wood Engravings, from Pictures by the AUTHOR,
B. RIVIERE, R.A., the late H. STACY MARKS, R.A., and the
late FREDERICK WALKER, R.A. Royal 8vo, price 9s. net.

*** The Wood Engravings in this Volume show some of the finest effects which the Art of Wood Engraving could produce.



The Author's Punt.

THE POLITICAL LIFE
OF THE RIGHT HON.
W. E. GLADSTONE.

Illustrated from "PUNCH."

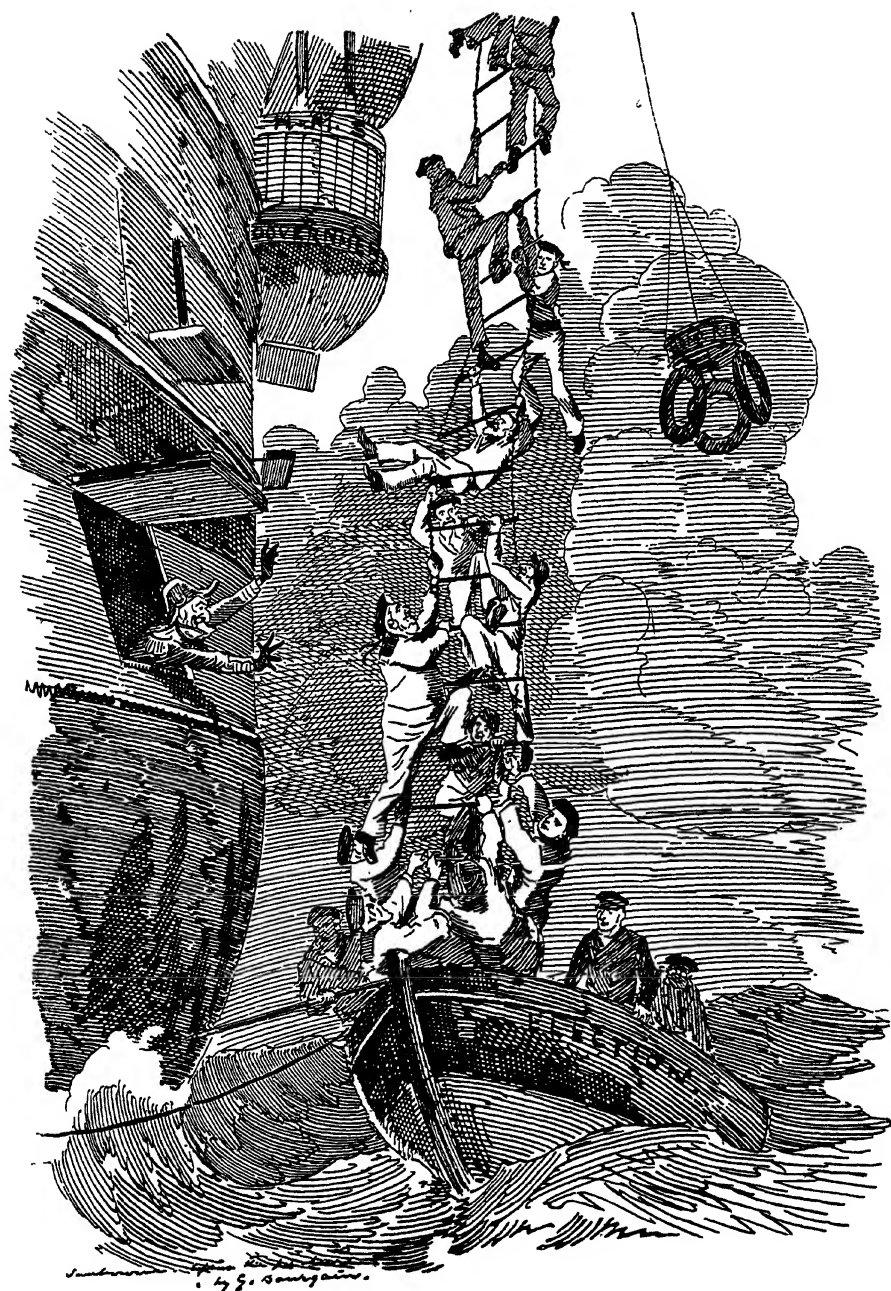
With a large Collection of Pictures, Sketches, and Cartoons, full size or reduced. In Three Crown 4to Volumes, half-bound in leather back and cloth sides, price 10s. each net.

ALSO

The Original and Larger Edition,

In Three Volumes, Demy 4to, bound in cloth, gilt top and deckle edges,
price 20s. each net.

(A few copies only remaining.)



GOING ON BOARD.

THE
HANDY VOLUME SHAKSPEARE.

A choice Miniature Edition, complete with Glossaries, in Thirteen little
Volumes, enclosed in a case and issued in two styles:—

In cloth binding, price 21s. complete in case.

In red leather, gilt edges, 31s. 6d. complete in case.

*** On the opposite page are shown the size and the type in which the Volumes are printed
and on page 29 are given specimens of the Glossary to "Hamlet."

Then take thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh ;

But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice.

Gra. O upright judge !—Mark, Jew !—O
learned judge !

Shy. Is that the law ?
Por. Thyself shall see the act :

For, as thou urgest justice, be assured
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.

Gra. O learned judge !—Mark, Jew ;—a
learned judge !

Shy. I take this offer then,—pay the bond
thrice,

And let the Christian go.

Here is the money.

Bas. Soft.

Por. The Jew shall have all justice ;—soft ;—no
haste ;—

He shall have nothing but the penalty.

Gra. O Jew ! an upright judge, a learned
judge !

Por. Therefore, prepare thee to cut off the
flesh.

Shed thou no blood ; nor cut thou less, nor more,
But just a pound of flesh : if thou tak'st more,

Or less, than a just pound,—be it but so much
As makes it light, or heavy, in the substance,

Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple,—nay, if the scale do turn

But in the estimation of a hair,—
Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.

Gra. A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew !
Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.

Por. Why doth the Jew pause ? take thy for-
feiture.

Shy. Give me my principal, and let me go.

Bas. I have it ready for thee ; here it is.

Por. He hath refused it in the open court ;

He shall have merely justice, and his bond.

Gra. A Daniel, still say I ; a second Daniel !—

I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

Shy. Shall I not have barely my principal ?

Por. Thou shalt have nothing but the for-
feiture,

To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

Shy. Why, then the devil give him good of it !
I'll stay no longer question.

Por. Tarry, Jew ;

The law hath yet another hold on you.

It is enacted in the laws of Venice,—

If it be proved against an alien,

That by direct or indirect attempts

He seek the life of any citizen,

The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive

Shall seize one half his goods ; the other half

Comes to the privy coffer of the state ;

And the offender's life lies in the mercy

Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice.

In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st ;

For it appears by manifest proceeding,

That, indirectly, and directly too,

Thou hast contrived against the very life

Of the defendant ; and thou hast incur'd

The danger formerly by me rehearsed.

Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the duke.

Gra. Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang
thyself :

And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,

Thou hast not left the value of a cord ;

SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS.

HANDY VOLUME EDITION.

A complete Collection of the Plays, with the "Poems and Sonnets," in Thirty-nine little Volumes, each Volume containing a single Play with a Glossary of Obsolete Words and Phrases.

The Volumes, enclosed in a case measuring $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and bound in limp cloth, coloured edges, price 25s.

** On the preceding page is shown the type in which the Plays are printed, and on the opposite page are given specimens of the pages of Glossary.

GLOSSARY.

Bacrements—bedded hair, like life in excrements.
 The word *excrement* was a general term for anything growing out of the body, as the hair or nails.
Byasse, nestings. An *eyes* is a young unfledged hawk, just taken from the nest.
Fantasy, imagination, fancy.
Fardels, cumbersome or inconvenient burdens, Fey, faith. Possibly from the French *foi*.
For and a *thronding sheet*, and also a shrouding sheet.
Fordest, undoes, destroys, ruins.
Friending, friendliness, friendship, favour.
Fust, to become mouldy or fusty, to smell ill.
Gentry, courtesy, good breeding, politeness.
Gib, a tom-cat.
Gules, red.
Handsau—*know a hawk from a handsaw*. The word "handsaw" is a corruption of *heronshaw*, a provincial term for a heron.
Hebanon, possibly intended for *henbane*.
Hent—*know thou a more horrid hent*, i.e. be reserved for a more dreadful occasion.
Hic et ubique, here and everywhere.
Hoodman-blind, the game of blind-man's buff.
Hugger-mugger, clandestinely, by stealth.
Impudens, unchecked, without pity, merciless.
Imponed, laid down as a wager.
In few, in a few words, in brief.
John-a-dreams, a sleepy, muddle-headed fellow.
Jump, just, exactly, in the nick of time. A familiar term with this signification in Shakespeare's days.
Keep—welter they keep, i.e. what places they frequent.
Kith, a chiblain.
Lets, hinders, prevents, impedes.
Liberal shepherds, free-spoken, licentious shepherds. An obsolete meaning of the word *liberal*.

GLOSSARY.

Limed soul, i.e. caught as with bird-lime.
List, a boundary or limit.
Laggats, an old game, which consisted in fixing a stake in the ground and pitching small pieces of wood at it.
Long live the King! The watchword of the night.
Masard, the head, the skull.
Merely—jesses it merely, i.e. absolutely.
Mitching mallecho, Skulking mischief.
Mitch, moist, shedding tears.
Mobled, muffed or wrapped up, veiled.
Moist star, the moon.
Mutines, mutineers.
Napkin—take my napkin, i.e. my handkerchief.
Native to, connected by nature with.
Obsequious, serious, as at funeral obsequies.
Occurrents, occurrences, current incidents or events.
Paddock, a toad. A diminutive of the Anglo-Saxon *pad*, a toad.
Painted word, i.e. disguised word.
Patocke, a peacock.
Parle, a parley, a conference with an opponent.
Perdy, an exclamation. A contraction from the French *par Dieu!*
Polack, Poles, natives of Poland.
Porpentine, porcupine. An obsolete form of the word.
Provincial roses on my razed shoes, i.e. roses in the shape of Provence or dumask roses, on shoes, which according to the fashion of the period were slashed or streaked in patterns.
Quiddits, quiddities, subtleties in law or in common talk.
Quilliers, nice points or quibbles.
Quoted, observed, noted, scanned.
Rack, a mass of clouds.
Recorders. A recorder was a kind of flagcolet.

THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN'S LIBRARY EDITION.

"HANDLEY CROSS" SERIES

OF

SPORTING NOVELS.

Embellished with 400 of JOHN LEECH'S best Sketches on Wood, and 87 Hand-coloured Steel Engravings by JOHN LEECH and H. K. BROWNE. In Six Medium 8vo Volumes, cloth extra, price £4 4s.

These Volumes can be had separately as under:—

- HANDLEY CROSS; or, Mr. Jorrocks's Hunt.** Many Sketches on Wood, and 17 Steel Engravings. Price 16s.
- ASK MAMMA; or, The Richest Commoner in England.** Many Sketches on Wood, and 13 Steel Engravings. Price 14s.
- SPONGE'S SPORTING TOUR.** Many Sketches on Wood, and 13 Steel Engravings. Price 14s.
- PLAIN OR RINGLETS?** Many Sketches on Wood, and 12 Steel Engravings. Price 14s.
- MR. FACEY ROMFORD'S HOUNDS.** 24 Steel Engravings. Price 14s.
- HAWBUCK GRANGE; or, The Sporting Adventures of Thomas Scott, Esquire.** With 8 Steel Engravings by H. K. BROWNE (Phiz). Price 12s. 6d.

* * This inimitable series of Volumes is absolutely unique, there being nothing approaching to them in all the wide range of modern or ancient literature. Written by Mr. Surtees, a well-known country gentleman, who was passionately devoted to the healthy sport of fox-hunting, and gifted with a keen spirit of manly humour of a Rabelaisian tinge, they abound with incidents redolent of mirth and jollity. The Artist, Mr. Leech, was himself also an enthusiast in the sport, and has reflected in his Illustrations, with instinctive appreciation, the rollicking abandon of the Author's stories.

THE "JORROCKS" EDITION
OF THE
HANDLEY CROSS SPORTING
NOVELS.

Six Volumes, Large Crown 8vo, with Illustrations, price 36s.

The Volumes are sold separately as under :—

HANDLEY CROSS; or, Mr. Jorrocks's Hunt. With 67 Text and 12 Page Illustrations and Coloured Frontispiece. Price 7s. 6d.

ASK MAMMA; or, The Richest Commoner in England. With 51 Text and 8 Page Illustrations and Coloured Frontispiece. Price 6s.

SPONGE'S SPORTING TOUR. With 60 Text and 8 Page Illustrations and Coloured Frontispiece. Price 6s.

PLAIN OR RINGLETS? With 43 Text and 8 Page Illustrations and Coloured Frontispiece. Price 6s.

MR. FACEY ROMFORD'S HOUNDS. With 46 Text and 8 Page Illustrations and Coloured Frontispiece. Price 6s.

HAWBUCK GRANGE; or, The Sporting Adventures of Thomas Scott, Esquire. With 28 Text and 8 Page Illustrations and Coloured Frontispiece. Price 4s. 6d.

*** Every one whose delight is in a "finest run across country that ever was seen," and whose ambition is "to be in at the finish," may now have as his abiding companions on his own book-case within reach of his easy-chair, the histories of JORROCKS and SPONGE and ROMFORD, and others of the famous creation, in a handsome and handy form; having the pages brightened by a selection from the original Illustrations to give an added vividness to the exhilarating raciness of the Author's humour.

MISCELLANEOUS VOLUMES.

F. ANSTEY.

Mr. PUNCH'S YOUNG RECITER. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, price 3s. 6d.

Mr. PUNCH'S MODEL MUSIC HALL SONGS AND DRAMAS. Illustrated by E. T. REED
Crown 8vo, price 4s. 6d.

PUPPETS AT LARGE. Illustrated by S. B. PARTRIDGE. Crown 8vo, price 5s.

J. L. MOLLOY.

AUTUMN HOLIDAY ON FRENCH RIVERS (Our). With upwards of 50 Illustrations by
LINLEY SAMBOURNE. Crown 8vo, price 7s. 6d.

F. C. BURNAND.

ABOUT BUYING A HORSE. Small 8vo, cloth, price 2s. 6d

HAPPY THOUGHTS. With 110 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, price 5s.

NEW HISTORY OF SANDFORD AND MERTON (The). With 77 Illustrations by LINLEY
SAMBOURNE. Crown 8vo, price 3s. 6d.

QUITE AT HOME. With 108 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, price 5s.

RATHER AT SEA. With 116 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, price 5s.

REAL ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE (The). With 56 Illustrations by LINLEY
SAMBOURNE. Crown 8vo, price 5s

ROUND ABOUT MY GARDEN. Small 8vo, cloth, price 2s. 6d.

SOME OLD FRIENDS. With 115 Illustrations. Price 5s.

VERY MUCH ABROAD. With 160 Illustrations. Price 5s

DOUGLAS JERROLD.

CAUDLE'S (Mrs.) CURTAIN LECTURES. Crown Edition. Small 8vo, cloth, with Illustra-
tions, price 2s. 6d. Copyright Edition. Large Crown 8vo, in wrapper, price 1s.

STORY OF A FEATHER. Crown 8vo, cloth. Illustrated. Price 2s. 6d.

WM. EARLEY.

HIGH CLASS KITCHEN GARDENING. Crown 8vo, cloth, price 4s. 6d.

HOW TO GROW ASPARAGUS. 12mo, stitched, price 1s.

HOW TO GROW MUSHROOMS. 12mo, stitched, price 1s.

B. H. BADEN-POWELL, C.I.E.

FOREST LAW. A Course of Lectures on the Principles of Civil and Criminal Law, and of the
Law of the Forest. Demy 8vo, cloth, price 7s. 6d.

DR. LINDLEY'S WORKS.

DESCRIPTIVE BOTANY. For self-instruction and the use of Schools. Demy 8vo, stitched,
price 1s.

ELEMENTS OF BOTANY. Illustrated. Demy 8vo, cloth, price 9s.

GLOSSARY OF BOTANICAL TERMS. 8vo, limp cloth, price 5s.

MEDICAL AND ECONOMIC BOTANY. Illustrated. Demy 8vo, cloth, price 5s.

SCHOOL BOTANY. A Complete Manual of Rudimentary Botany for Students, &c. With 400
Illustrations. Demy 8vo, cloth, price 5s. 6d.

MRS. LOUDON.

THE LADIES' COMPANION TO THE FLOWER GARDEN. Crown 8vo, cloth, gilt edges,
price 7s.

R. C. LEHMANN.

Mr. PUNCH'S PRIZE NOVELS. Crown 8vo, price 4s. 6d.

PERCIVAL LEIGH.

PIP'S DIARY. Manners and Customs of Ye Englyshe. Illustrated by RICHARD DOYLE. Oblong
4to, price 12s. 6d.

H. W. LUCY.

QUEEN AND Mr. PUNCH (The). The Story of a Reign told by Toby, M.P. With 60
"Punch" Cartoons. Price 2s. 6d. in Wrapper, and 5s. in cloth, gilt edges.

WM. SCHLICH, Ph.D., C.I.E.

A MANUAL OF FORESTRY.

Volume 1.—The Utility of Forests, and Fundamental Principles of Sylviculture. Demy
8vo, cloth, price 6s. net.

" 2.—The Formation and Tending of Woods; or, Practical Sylviculture. Illustrated.
Price 7s. net.

" 3.—Forest Management. Illustrated. Price 8s. net.

" 4.—Forest Protection. By W. R. FISHER, B.A. With 259 Illustrations. Price
8s. net.

" 5.—Forest Utilization. By W. R. FISHER, B.A. With 343 Illustrations. Price
12s. net.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

SCOTT'S POETRY (Handy Volume). Seven volumes, 32mo, in case, price 12s. 6d. cloth, and
25s. French morocco.

SIR JOHN TENNIEL.

CARTOONS FROM PUNCH. Second Series, with Portrait. Royal 4to, price £1 1s.

VICTORIAN ERA (Mr. Punch's). An Illustrated Chronicle of 50 years of the reign of Her
Majesty the Queen. Containing 1,000 "Punch" Cartoons. In three elegant Royal 4to
volumes. Price £2 2s.

